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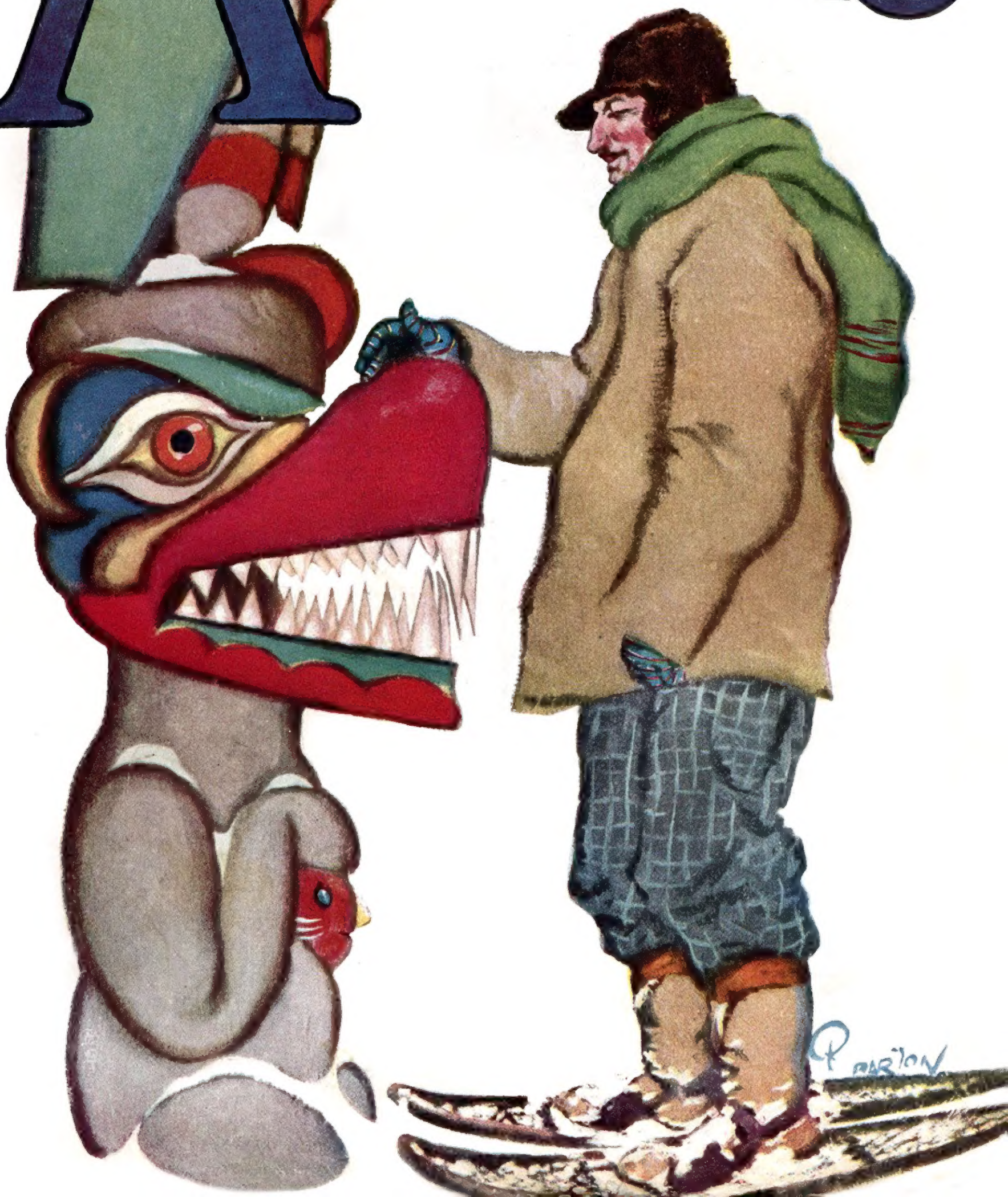
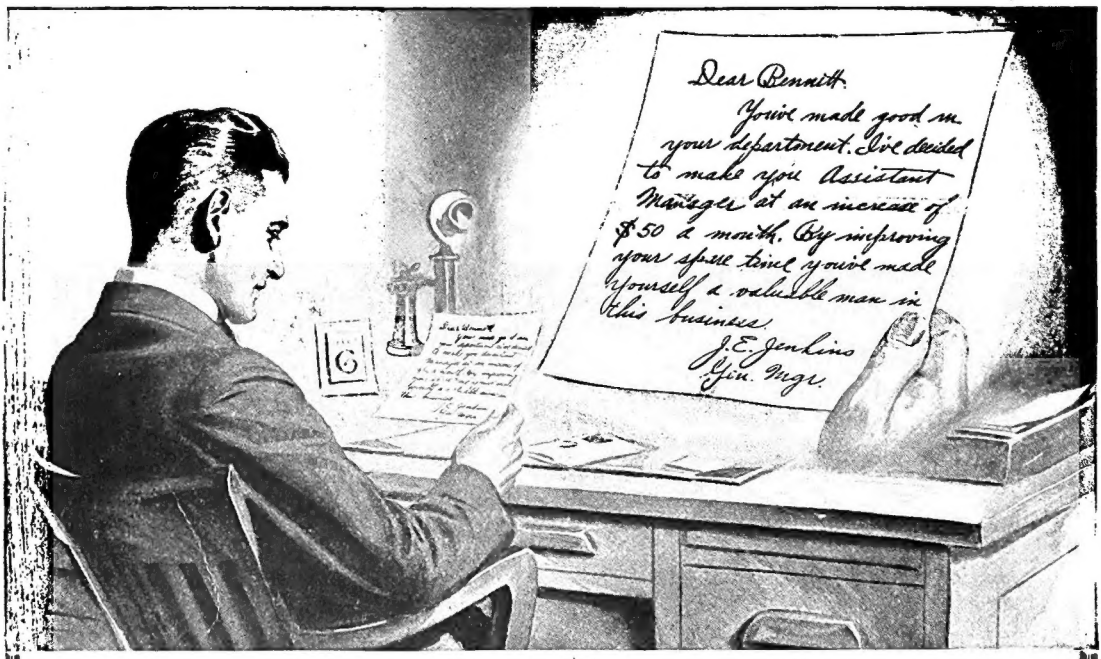
Adventure

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Adventure

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NO. 1

APRIL 3, 1918

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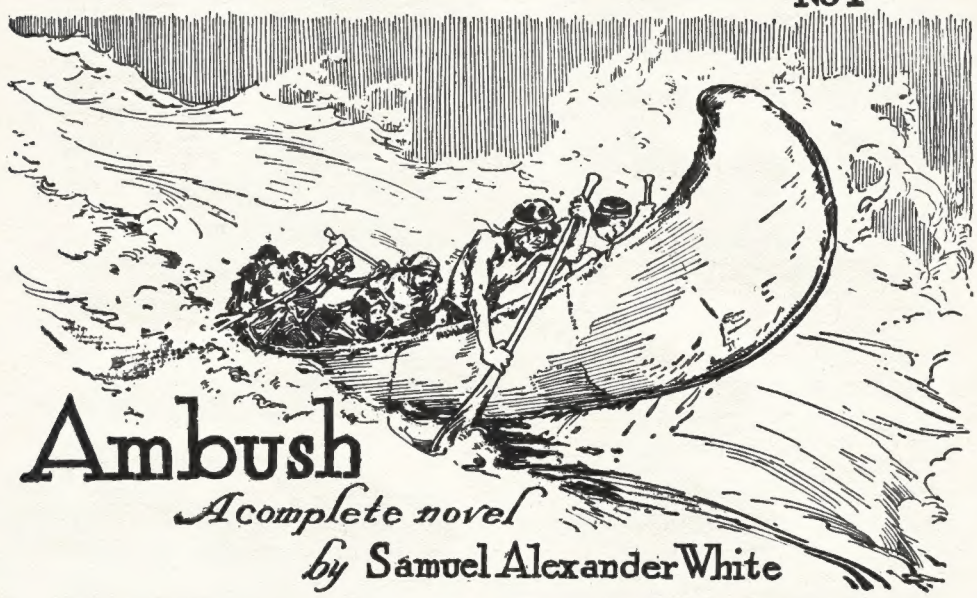

Ambush

A complete novel

by Samuel Alexander White

Author of "The Ocean Born," "The Wave Bound," etc.

CHAPTER I

A CHANGE OF COURIERS

THE blood-red, five-pointed stars emblazoned on the warm yellow bows of the seven birch-bark canoes which skirted Lake Superior's north shore advertised the fleet as a Hudson's Bay Company brigade. The predominancy of James Bay Crees among the crews told that the brigade was fresh from one of the bay posts—in all probability Moose Factory and that the route of travel had been up the Moose and Missinaibie Rivers, across the Height of Land and down the Michipicoten to the broad and restless bosom of Superior itself.

Also, the magnificence of the leading canoe and the elaborate costumes of its occupants proclaimed it a Factor's craft. A splendid six-fathom canoe, molded, sewn and gummed by master aborigine hands, it glided lightly as foam under the urge of half a dozen Indian paddlers, bowsman, steersman, two middlemen paired forward, two paired aft.

In the bow fluttered the crimson flag of the Ancient and Honorable Company. From the stern streamed a long gonfalon of the same shade, crisping and crackling in the wind and slapping its pennant-like tip with a resounding smack upon the passing wave crests.

From the paddle shafts blew streamers of gaudy wool, and these flying gleams of color mingled with the glint of bright-beaded moccasins, red and blue leggings, flaming belts and scarfs, brilliant fillets bound about the black-haired heads carrying still more brilliant feathers, long, graceful plumes dyed in violent colors, which slanted back on the wearers' shoulders and marked them as trusted canoemen of a Factor.

The Factor himself, a young man compared to the aging priest who shared his place amidships, half sat, half reclined upon a rich robe of snow-white ermine-skin. The

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priest was dressed somberly, cowled and cassocked in black after the fashion of Jesuit missionaries, with canvas gauntlets upon his hands and a mosquito veil covering his face, but rich as the robe they both reclined upon was the young man's every garment, fastidious, distinctive, elegant, at once suiting a personality of superior tastes and fitting his rank as an overlord of the mighty company.

Upon abnormally heavy shoulders he wore a blanket-cloth coat of a rare fawn color.

Across his wide chest the coat was thrown open to the sweeping lake breeze, and, underneath, a low-collared shirt of fine flannel, also unbuttoned, fluttered and crinkled and bellied, revealing his huge deltoids and the great muscled ridges extending from neck to shoulder. His lower limbs were clothed in short trousers of creamy deerskin tanned soft and pliable as chamois and meeting Summer moccasins of the same material, high-cut above the calf like Winter shoe-packs.

A massive frame he possessed and possessed it proudly. Rugged like the neck was the head that rose above it, the clean-shaven, well-rounded jaw hollowed above the chin, the mouth full and firm, nose straight and spaciously nostriled for the big lungs, cheek-bones high and well-fleshed, hollowing the face again in front of the small close-set ears.

Hair short-cropped and clean of scalp, his head was covered with a cap of soft amber leather, the visor peak of which shaded his gray eyes from the sun. Calm, self-reliant, determined, yet with the flash of the youthful spirit in them tempered by a wealth of experience, the eyes looked ahead over Superior's rollers toward the rock-ramparted, spruce-sentineled shore, and his voice when he spoke belied nothing of the masterfulness of his frame, his face or his eye.

It was a deep voice, strong and resonant, thrilling with a peculiar timbre which betrayed the fact that he was accustomed to read aloud from books or perhaps make oration to gatherings of traders and tribes. It was the voice of one in authority, one who supremely commands, decrees the law.

"Look, Father Andrews," he exulted, extending a powerful brown, mobile hand, "yonder is our island. It hides the bay behind. Eugene Drummond will meet us in Grande Portage to-night, and to-morrow we shall be well on our way to our new district."

"But are you sure your voyageur will not fail you, Carlisle?" hazarded Father Andrews.

"Eugene never fails me," declared Carlisle with a shake of his head. "Last Fall when I got news of my transfer this Summer from Moose Factory to Cumberland House and sent him in to spy out the land, I gave him especial warning to be at Grande Portage not later than July the ninth. I told him I would reach there today, the ninth, on my way to Cumberland House, and he was under orders to lead the brigade on. No, he will not fail!"

With a swing of his body he twisted his head and nodded to his Ojibway steersman.

"The channel, Missowa!" he directed in the Ojibway dialect.

"Ae, Factor," returned Missowa who was standing up to his work in the high-curved stern. And in a different, guttural tone he added the laconic word—"Canoe!"

"So?" demanded Carlisle, sitting erect to stare under his hand. "Maybe it's the Iroquois Indian who passed without seeing us as we ate dinner down the shore."

"No Iroquois," decided the Ojibway steersman. "No Indian. White man. A man of the French Company."

"A Northwest Fur Company man, eh? Yes, Missowa, yes—I believe you are right."

For now he saw it was indeed the Northwest Fur Company's livery that the approaching paddler wore, a Northwest canoe he paddled out through the molten wash of gold that the westering sun spilled over the high wooded mainland ridge where the Pigeon River brawled down to Superior.

Like a Northwest voyageur passing out of Grande Portage Bay upon the customary evening fishing excursion the canoeman drifted, his slender paddle stirring the golden wash and gilding itself therein, his glistening yellow craft slanting like a shaft of sunshine from roller crest to roller trough and back again.

But once outside the channel where the tree-crowned island which hid the bay screened him from sight of any one on shore, Carlisle noted a change in his attitude. From the casual pose of a fisherman he suddenly threw himself into the pose of one who runs a race, and paddling viciously, bore like a surf-rider down upon the Factor's craft.

Every time he retrieved his paddle after the plunge he caused it to touch the lake surface with a vicious forward poke which sent the spray spattering like shot against his canoe bow where the letters N. W. were smeared in black pitch. The smear seemed to annoy him, and at every splash the Factor could hear him growl low in his throat.

"*Certainement*," he reiterated, "I change you soon. I change you soon!"

TWENTY feet away, and still in mid-career, he whirled his prow with one flick of his paddle on to the nose of a cross-sea, and there he poised spectacularly, balancing with superb skill the while he threw the tasseled cap from his head into the canoe-bottom and followed it with the red shirt stripped from his body. Naked to the waist around which buckskin trousers were loosely belted, he stood silhouetted against the flaming disk of the sun, his short, squat, powerful body, tanned to a smoky bronze, shining dull-red.

All the time his expressive hands gesticulated. His volatile face, tanned like his body, creased itself in a cunning grin so that the milk-white teeth gleamed, the thin nostrils quivered, the cold-black eyes danced. The grin became a chuckle, and he tossed his head from side to side, streaming his raven hair this way and that in wild disorder on the whistling wind.

"Eh, w'at you t'ink, *camarades?*" he saluted as he stamped upon the discarded shirt.

"Drummond!" ejaculated Carlisle and Missowa in one breath.

"*Oui*," laughed the voyageur, "an' glad to be rid of dat disguise! Once I scrape dat *diable* pitch off ma bows an' paint dem wit' de crimson star, I feel happy again."

Carlisle glanced aside at the priest with a quiet smile of vindication.

"I told you, Father, that Eugene would not fail me," he reminded.

"Aye, Paul," nodded Andrews, "and may all your subjects always be as faithful!"

The Factor turned back to Eugene Drummond.

"But why did you not wait in Grande Portage as I ordered?" he demanded. "Why are you in that disguise and why have you come down the lake to meet me?"

"De Nor'westaires close Grande Portage," announced Drummond, with a dramatic sweep of his arm. "Nobody goes troo—Hudson's Bay men, Free-Traders, nor anybody else."

Something like an imprecation rumbled in Carlisle's throat. A wave of anger suffused and darkened the sun-bronze of his face, and his gray eyes widened, glinting hard.

"They would try that?" he blurted in a voice so heavy that it was almost a bellow. "They would dare?"

"Dey have dared," assured the voyageur. "Dey claim her as Nor'west ground. Ba gar, Factor, dis beeg fight dat t'reatens so long, she's come at last. All troo de Saskatchewan w'ere you sent me spyin' I be see de signs."

"What about our trade on the Saskatchewan now?"

"It's wan long report, an' I'm have to geeve you de figures ashore, but to spik her brief, I'm find de Nor'westaires be winnin' our trade. *Oui*, and dere's anodder winnin' more dan us or de Nor'westaires."

"A Free-Trader, eh?"

"*Certainement*, wan American frontiersman named Ralph Wayne."

The six-fathom canoe gave a violent lurch. Father Andrews had started suddenly, and even as Carlisle gazed at him in mild surprise the priest viciously smote the palm of his left gauntlet down the back of his right.

"A mosquito under your glove, eh, Father?" the Factor bantered, angry gravity disappearing from his face under the impulse of whimsical laughter. "It takes more than canvas to stop those whining bloodsuckers."

The priest answered nothing, but while he rubbed his hand Eugene Drummond gazed keenly at him across the twenty-foot water gap. For Andrews had been a mystery to Drummond ever since the first time he had set eyes on him. That was twenty-one years before when the priest had drifted up Lake Huron into Fort Michillimackinac in charge of the nine-year-old boy, Paul Carlisle. The boy's father, so Andrews gave it out, was an English officer, Captain Charles Carlisle of Butler's Rangers, stationed at Niagara, who had been killed in Butler's raid upon the Wyoming Valley and who, being a widower, had left the boy in his charge.

That was all Eugene Drummond knew of the history of either of the two, and the passing of twenty-one years had not increased his knowledge very much. True, he had seen young Paul schooled, given entrance as a clerk into the service of the great company, advanced little by little, transferred for a period to England where he managed the London fur sales and at the same time dipped into the higher learning, and finally made Factor of the important James Bay post of Moose Factory whence he was now moved to be lord of Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan.

Although Andrews was his companion and guardian through it all, and Eugene Drummond was in almost constant contact with

them in the Hudson's Bay Company's service, the voyageur had never solved the intangible mystery that he fancied surrounded the priest. Never in those twenty-one years had Drummond fairly seen the man Andrews, his figure or his face.

Always he looked upon a gown that seemed to him to shroud and to conceal, upon head-gear that was something of a mask. Now, in Summer, it was the heavy dun cowl and the thick mosquito veil. In Winter it was the dun cowl and a fur-fringed, helmet-like hood on his capote that proved just as impenetrable.

Drummond always imagined that if Andrews but dropped the mask his mystery would dissolve, and the suspended possibility continually fretted and irritated him. *Mon Dieu*, why could not the man be human like the rest of these large-thewed, tangible Northmen? He was tired of watching an elusive ghost flitting about in a black gown. And why *le diable* had Andrews started and lurched the canoe just now?

Was it because of a mosquito-bite or was it because he, Eugene, had voiced the name of Ralph Wayne? The voyageur determined to watch and see, but as he went on to speak further of the Free-Trader, his shrewd dark eyes could read nothing, for the priest now sat impassive, still rubbing lightly the thumb of his left gauntlet along the back of his right.

"Dis man Wayne is de great powaire in dat West," elucidated Eugene, "an' he be built wan stronghold Fort Wayne to defend hees district. He be de mightiest of de independents, de leader of dem all, an' he be de enemy, as mooch as de Nor'westaires, dat we have to fight an' absorb."

Carlisle, listening, nodded ponderously, his face clouded, his forehead ridged in a frown, as if he weighed the voyageur's news within himself and found it of heavy portent. His nod was a sign of complete understanding and an intimation for Eugene to go on.

"So as well as to warn you about Grande Portage bein' closed I be come out to tell you of dis man Wayne. He be beeg menace to de Nor'westaires, joost lak us, an' dey're goin' to fight an' absorb heem —— queeck."

"How quick?" demanded the Factor.

"Dis night. I sign on wit' de Nor'westaires an' wear deir clothes to get de information, an' I'm come down from de West wit' wan Lake Winnipeg brigade. We pass Wayne dis mornin' on de Pigeon River. He be on hees way to Montreal wit' hees season's furs. He make de Portage dis evenin'. He ain't know she's closed.

"De Nor'westaires tell heem w'en he come in, an' den dey're goin' absorb heem on de spot. An' dat ain't de worst, eider. Hees daughter Joan Wayne be travelin' wit' heem to Montreal an' de Nor'west partners goin' seize her along wit' her father. Wan of de partners has hees eye on her dis long taim, so dey tell me in de post."

"Which partner?" Carlisle's words slipped forth, sharp as slitting steel.

"Richelieu!"

"Then this thing's serious, Eugene," declared the Factor, "and it means that you and I have to get into Grande Portage this afternoon. We must meet Wayne's brigade at the other end of the Portage and warn him and his daughter. We must do it for trade and other reasons. You have your disguise all ready. We'll go ashore and fashion mine."

"Ba gar," cried Drummond with a grimace, "I'm t'ink I'm done wit' dose *diable* trappings, but she's de good cause an' in de good cause I'm glad to wear dem leetle longaire. An' you, Factor, I'm t'ink mebbe you pick wan off de lake!"

He pointed straight down the north shore.

"You see wan Iroquois Indian paddle in to Grande Portage dis afternoon? Ver' well, dat's de guide of de Montreal mail canoe. De courier send heem ahead de last few miles to report de mail comin'. An' I'm know she's comin' soon, for yondaire's paddles flashin' lak loons' wings off de Temple Rock."

THE Hudson's Bay brigade lay fairly in the sun glare streaming like a path of gold across the heaving lake swells. The sun itself was at their backs as they all stared in the indicated direction, and they could see without being readily seen.

"By heavens, you're right!" exclaimed Carlisle. "It surely is the Montreal canoe. I take your hint, Drummond. It is as the courier I shall go in. Missowa," commanding the Ojibway steersman, "lie in the shelter of yon small island. We can not be seen there, and there it does not matter to us whether the Northwester takes the inside or the outside passage. Eugene, fall in with the other craft behind."

At a spoken word from Missowa the port

paddlers dipped a strong forward stroke. The starboard paddlers hung with a backwater stroke as strong. The Factor's craft swung in a choppy half-circle and slanted off for the lee of the island round the bouldered point where the big rollers broke in a white smother. Drummond, turning in behind with the six smaller canoes, greeted the motley crowd which filled them four men to each craft, with a knowing grin.

James Bay Crees the Indians were, together with Ojibways and an occasional Chippewa, all trusted post runners and trippers of the company and all personally known to the voyageur. Known likewise were the white men, Hampton the younger son of an English squire, Jarvis the street arab picked up from the pavements of London and in the service as a clerk, Wells the country youth from a South-of-England shire, Garry and Lea the two hardy Scots from Inverness and Cromarty and the hardier Highlander Lewis from the savage Hebrides.

Although Eugene had not seen any of them for nearly eight months he recognized every member of the brigade at a glance. Greatly his volatile nature longed to hail each by his familiar name and pass with each a fitting and peculiar jest, but the Montreal canoe was approaching and silence was the order from Carlisle.

Not long had they to lie in ambush behind the concealing island. Presently arose a sound of water thrown from a pail upon the lake surface in spaced gushes—the splash of careless paddles.

"Line them out, Missowa!" Carlisle commanded in a whisper.

Like magic the eight canoes slipped from concealment and, bow to stern throughout the line, totally barred the channel passage which the Northwest courier was taking for smoother water. His two Iroquois canoemen brought up the craft suddenly with bending paddle shafts and foaming blades, while the courier himself, a swarthy-skinned Frenchman, half arose in amazement from amidships, either hand upon the gunwales.

"I am Bertand, Northwest mail courier from Montreal," he began in French, "and you are——"

"Of Hudson's Bay, as you see," smiled Carlisle, answering him in his own tongue.

"And you want?"

"Your letters, your clothes and your canoe. The letters will go on safely to Grande Portage. Your clothes and canoe, the same or better, will be returned to you. Meanwhile you rest quietly on shore here. Do you agree?"

The courier's eyes ran over the line, and he shrugged his shoulders in resignation.

"But yes," he agreed, "because I am no fool, especially in the face of superior numbers."

"Very well," nodded Carlisle, and waved the Northwester's Indian paddlers inshore.

"Eugene," he directed, "put on your shirt and cap and slip back as you came. It is best for us to go in separately, and besides, I leave it to you to get the Iroquois guide who arrived this afternoon out of my way when I come. Do it any way you can, but be sure to get rid of him short of bludgeoning him. I'll waste no time other than to arrive at a decent interval after you."

"And I, Eugene," put in Father Andrews abruptly, "shall drift in alone a little ahead of Paul."

Taken unawares, the voyageur exclaimed loudly in his French tongue and darted Andrews another of those sharp wondering looks with which he was wont to regard the priest. *Par Dieu*, here was that mystery again! What *le diable*, he demanded of himself, did a priest want in mixing in such affairs?

And even Carlisle regarded Andrews with grave astonishment.

"You had better not risk it, Father," he advised. "You know there will be danger in the business."

"For you," admitted Andrews, "but not for me! Why should the Northwesters bother their heads about a lone priest? Does my breed not watch at birth of Northwesters and Hudson's Bay men alike, minister to their living needs alike and bury them alike at death? I shall surely go, for I have in mind what Eugene said about the girl."

CHAPTER II

GRANDE PORTAGE

DRESSED in the Montreal courier's clothes, the cheap black cotton shirt, travel-soiled mackinaw trousers and cowhide moccasins, his face and hands stained with herbs to a swarthy shade and his head covered with a battered blue felt hat pulled well down over his eyes, Carlisle sat amidships in the courier's canoe, the brown

canvas, leather-bound mail-sack between his knees as the craft rounded the island which screened Grande Portage Bay.

Their own brilliant and picturesque costumes discarded for the drab gear of the Iroquois canoemen, Missowa the Ojibway steersman and Waseyawin the Cree bowsman stoically paddled him in with their short quick strokes. The canoe nosed into the channel, a mile and one-quarter wide, and the wilderness post broke suddenly upon his vision.

On his left hand lay the sheltering island with its rubble of great gnarled boulders littering the beach, its long sloping point sheering up and its rampart of bush standing solid above. On his right spread the amphitheater of the bay, a crescent sweep of shallow water, delicate green in color and clear as air, edged by a low flat shore which was backed in turn by terraced Laurentian hills.

Tier upon tier they rose, the lowest three hundred feet in height, the highest over one thousand, covered with crowding forest of birch and spruce and pine, thrusting out virgin arms to embrace the lesser island.

Walling the back of the level shore land and curving westward into the lake rose a natural barrier, a forty-foot cliff of rock. Along the eastern side foamed a small stream, and hard by the stream the post buildings crouched in the clearing. Under the first hill tier they huddled, surrounded by cedar palisades eighteen feet in height.

Tent villages and Indian cabins, spiraled with the smoke of many fires, dotted the eastern bank of the stream, while on the meadows and terraces farther back grazed cattle brought up the lakes in large boats or driven overland by wood trails from St. Paul on the Mississippi.

Over the bouldered channel-bottom, distinctly seen through the intensely clear water, over the pebbled reach farther inshore Carlisle's craft drove straight for a long canoe pier whereon he glimpsed many men at work loading or unloading canoes. As he approached he noted that the pier was built so as to form a canoe harbor. Fashioned of great square-timbered crib-work, spiked with iron, its foundation heavily stone-weighted to hold it in the bay, it was formed by two arms.

The long western arm or shoreway streaked out from the curving sand beach into the bay, meeting at an angle the short eastern or harbor arm which extended but half-way back to land. Thus with only a narrow water gate for entrance was enclosed a canoe harbor which was safe for fragile crafts in any storm.

Though only a slight swell disturbed the channel outside, the harbor inside was calmer still. It lay like a mill-pond parting to Carlisle's rippling bows as he passed the fur sloop *Otter*, lashed to the pier just outside the water, and the arm of the pier itself, his eyes following the curving bilge of the sloop from water-line to keel and marking the bottom-most timbers of the crib-work weed-grown in the clear green depths. Who had built the old pier he did not know, for here he touched upon ancient ground.

Perhaps, he thought, it was the wanderer Dulhut who first of all established Grande Portage post in 1670. Perhaps it was the later adventurer Lanove who rebuilt Dulhut's post in 1717. Or, again, it might have been any one of the swarm of French and Scotch traders who, after the fall of Quebec to the English in 1759, pushed their trading places along the Great Lakes to Detroit, Michillimackinac, the Sault, the Kaministiquia River and finally to Grande Portage at the mouth of the Pigeon.

Later, and before Carlisle was born, English traders foregathered there, and a score of fur lords competed, bickered and fought to finally amalgamate into the Northwest Fur Company with the avowed intention of slowly but surely sweeping the Hudson's Bay Company from the continent. How well the Northwesters were succeeding in this his own generation Carlisle realized was known only to a few like himself who occupied high posts in the service, and his whole being thrilled at the trust imposed on this few by the older corporation when it commissioned them to throw down the gage of decisive battle.

No ordinary routine incident was his transfer from Moose Factory to Cumberland House but the first move in a mighty struggle which could mean for his company only one of two things: conquest or cession. And how desperate must be that struggle was borne in upon him by the plain truth that here at the very outset he was setting foot into a stronghold of his enemies almost single-handed.

Enemies! His gray eyes lightened with the anticipative gleam of conflict, but abruptly came remembrance of the courier

rôle he had assumed and he motioned his two pseudo Iroquois canoemen to work him in against the crib.

A pause in the toil and a shout from the toilers greeted him. All along the pier within reach of his hand were tied the big Rabiscaw freight canoes from Montreal, and the men who worked them through the Ottawa and French Rivers and the lake route to Grande Portage were the ones unloading the cargoes they had brought: arms and ammunition; knives, axes, blankets; cottons from the looms of far Manchester, gaudy handkerchiefs of silk and cotton; rope and twine, fishing nets and lines; copper kettles and other cooking utensils; beads and mirrors; kegs of rum; carrot tobacco, twist tobacco; tea, flour, sugar —articles of food and trade in endless variety.

And the men themselves Carlisle recognized as the giant Pork Eaters famed on the trail, French voyageurs off the Ottawa River and the parishes around, Iroquois Indians, Caughnawaga Indians, fierce, untamed. They yelled shrilly, the white men dancing joyously at the arrival of the mail, but Carlisle gave no answer other than to shake the pouch suggestively as his canoe glided close in at the end of the shoreway. There he leaped out and, his two canoeman stalking at his back, strode across the flat and in through the open gate of the palisade. Leaving Missowa and Waseyawin in the yard, he went on to the main warehouse where he knew he would find the post-keeper in charge.

With his blood leaping in his body he stepped over the threshold, for he knew also whom he would see sitting there. If his disguise deceived David Thompson he was safe to go where he willed in Grande Portage.

He had full confidence in his masquerade, but at the same time the knowledge that this was a critical test keyed him to severest tension, poised his physical being for a dash to escape if his confidence should not be instantly justified. He carried the mail-sack on his shoulder as he passed between the door-jambs, shooting a glance under the sack and his curved arm, seeking out the keeper.

AT SIGHT of a little office railed off from the general warehouse, Carlisle's fibers thrilled again, for behind it he beheld Thompson, as ever astronomer and explorer rather than fur-trader, poring over his maps and plans.

At the swish of the courier's moccasins he looked up.

"Ha! Art here then," he nodded, his Welsh origin betraying itself in his speech. "Tuh guide reported 'ee some hours ago. Put thy sack down there. Whilst make tuh entry."

As Thompson drew forward the journal of the Post, Carlisle silently expelled a deep breath. Thompson had passed him! Thompson who for thirteen years had served in the Hudson's Bay Company with him, who had lived the routine post life or taken the far trail with him. Thompson with whom he had built Manchester House and Wintered among the Indians and sojourned at Samuel Hearne's old post, Cumberland House, which was now to be his own.

Thompson with whom he had parted regretfully when, on being ordered by Colen, Factor at York Factory, to do less surveying and get more trade returns, Thompson had left the service in a heat and gone over to the Northwest Company to undertake a journey of discovery that shamed Colen and all the Hudson's Bay. How Carlisle envied him and his new company that feat—the survey west from Grande Portage to Lakes Winnipeg and Winnipegosis, south on the Assiniboine to the Souris, across the plains to the Mandan villages on the Missouri; thence to the Assiniboine again, down to the Red River, across to the Mississippi's headwaters, northwest to Duluth on Lake Superior, 'round Superior's shore-line to the Sault and home once more to Grande Portage.

Four thousand miles of virgin wilderness mapped in ten months and to be fur-farmed on the basis of the mapping by the Northwesters! The magnitude of it was astounding, the attendant loss to the Hudson's Bay Company colossal. Holding his company's honor as he held his own, it hurt Carlisle keenly to think that his former friend and the company's former servant had been the cause.

But of Carlisle's state of feeling Thompson realized nothing. It was to his mind the Montreal mail-courier who stood before him, and he dipped his pen in the pot of brown ink. Carlisle, leaning sidewise against the grill, his elbow on the mail-pouch so that his big arm hid most of his face, waited with a renewal of his trepidation, the other entries of the journal, written in the fine, cramped hand he knew so well, dancing before his eyes. But in a moment

Thompson finished recording the mail-courier's arrival and closed the book.

"Art free now," he announced. "Thou wilt rest four days. Then 'ee wilt start back for Montreal."

Carlisle flopped his battered hat-brim in a nod of comprehension, swung on his moccasined heels and passed out without a word to where Missowa and Waseyawin awaited him.

"The order is to start back for Montreal in four days," he informed them with a grim smile. "In the meantime we are free to amuse ourselves."

"Good," grunted Waseyawin in Cree. "It is well for us to have that knowledge if any man should ask."

"Yes," nodded Carlisle, "and now we must get over the Portage as fast as we can. Have you seen Eug— Ha! Yonder's his red shirt at the gateway. Come and we'll see how things stand."

Carlisle and Drummond met casually outside the palisade, exchanging brief greetings and passing the news of the trail after the custom of Northmen meeting as strangers, then, still talking carelessly, strolled off up the path which led to Port Charlotte on the Pigeon's bank.

Not till they were completely out of sight of the post did they drop their careless pose, and not till then did the Cree and the Ojibway who had been loitering behind presume to catch up with them.

"What about the Iroquois guide?" Carlisle demanded abruptly of Drummond.

"He be served wit' extra rum for hees news of the mail comin', an' I'm see dat he get leetle more w'en I come back," chuckled Eugene. "*Mon Dieu*—dancin' drunk—ain't trouble you!"

"And Father Andrews?"

"He be gone on ahead," informed Eugene. "He ver' mooch afraid you be delayed somehow at de post, an' he t'ink in dat case it best for heem to go on to meet dem."

"Then let us hurry up and join him!" exclaimed Carlisle feverishly. "I want to be there when Wayne and his girl arrive. You lead off, Eugene."

With the woodsman's lope, swift though easy, the lope that never tires, never varies, Drummond led off, Carlisle at his heels, the two Indians swaying lithely in the rear. The Portage was nine miles in all, and for the first half-dozen miles they climbed a stiff grade, dropping into hundred-foot gulches and clambering out again, fording small creeks or thumping over them on roughly timbered bridges, threading swampy beaver meadows on paths of corduroy.

Then they topped the loftiest ridge whence the land rolled down in gentle convolutions to the brink of the river three miles away. Through the heart of a magnificent pinery, speckled here and there along the creeks with birch and poplar, Carlisle and his companions ran upon a trail the like of which was not to be found upon the continent. It was the connecting route between the Great Lakes and the vast West beyond.

Below Port Charlotte the Pigeon River ran wild, plunging in great cascades, unnavigable by even the hardiest voyageurs. There was no following it to its mouth, so brigades from the West unloaded here and packed over the nine-mile carry to Grande Portage on Superior's open water.

Every bale of fur gathered by the Northwesters in that gigantic wilderness from Lake Superior on the east to the Pacific on the west, from the Mississippi's headwaters on the south to the Arctic Ocean on the north was freighted here by the Northmen's canoes and carried across on their backs. Likewise all the supplies for that immensity of river, lake, forest, mountain, plain and barren, every pound of food and article of trade, brought to Grande Portage by the Rabiscaw canoes of Montreal, went across in the opposite direction upon the same muscled backs.

All along the rugged, twisting trail Carlisle and the others met or passed them in the act, huge Northmen from the Pays d'en Haut, Pork Eaters, Caughnawagas and Iroquois from the Ottawa, monstrously back-laden, working in the pack-straps in relays, setting down their burdens every thousand yards and breathing themselves as they retraced their steps for more.

Packing for the glory of the packer and a Spanish dollar a hundred pounds, they sweated and toiled, coming and going, dotting the up grade and the down and hiving thickly 'round the Port Charlotte landing where Carlisle and his three men came out on the river.

"Ba gar, we be none too soon," panted Drummond in a low voice. "Yondaire's Ralph Wayne's brigade."

He pointed toward the mid-current of the Pigeon, and Carlisle glimpsed half a

dozen canoes swerving in for the landing.

"And there's Father Andrews close by the water's edge!" exclaimed Carlisle. "Slow down to a walk and scatter out a little. And we'd better take packs as we go. Load up with anything handy and drop where I drop mine."

FROM the spot where the last relay had deposited the loads bound westward over the Portage they took up bundles and sacks of provisions and, bent under them as if they were regular burden bearers, shuffled down through the crowd of Northwesters on the river bank. Carlisle dropped his pack directly behind the priest, and the others following suit, they all straightened up, stretching their arms in the air, pretending to breathe themselves as they idly watched the incoming brigade.

"We're here, Father," Carlisle whispered at Andrews's back, "and so is the Free-Trader, I see. Are you going to tell him or shall I?"

"I must, Paul," returned Andrews in a voice of intense gravity. "It may seem strange to you, but neither Wayne nor his daughter must know your real name—yet. You may wonder, but I tell you in all faith it must be so. It is important—more, it is vital to your interests and Wayne's as well!"

"I must be to him a courier? That is, for the present?"

"Yes. You believe me when I say it is imperative?"

"Of course, Father. You know I have faith in your slightest word."

"All right, let me do the talking. The canoes are almost in."

The prow of the foremost craft all but grazed the landing, then swung broadside in to it under skilful paddle-strokes. From amidships a man of fifty-five or so, clad in buckskin garments unornamented except for the customary fringes, stepped cleanly out upon the shore. Carlisle, scrutinizing him eagerly, was struck by his great height. Although the Hudson's Bay Factor himself stood fully six feet, this man topped him by four inches, and the impression of height was intensified by his lanky erectness.

Clean-flanked, sloping-shouldered, long-armed, he seemed to poise in the air rather than to stand upon his battered moccasins. His head was bare, and from it the brown hair, luxuriant in spite of his advancing years, ran down in waves and curls almost to his shoulders. His face was darkened by exposure to a mahogany shade in which the only high lights that showed were the golden flash of odd-colored eyes, eyes between a fawn and a green hue, and the sheen of the copper-colored mustache which swept down in long heavy curves over the grim mouth.

Every inch a frontiersman, Carlisle sensed about him that greatness of spirit which ineffaceably clings to those who have dared the wilderness in all its immensity, all its ruthlessness, all its cruelty, who have dared it and conquered and inevitably in the conquering brought the depths of their natures to the surface. Even while Carlisle swiftly appraised him, he stooped with agility one hand on the canoe gunwale, the other held toward his daughter to steady her as she disembarked.

Out upon the landing she leaped beside him, and although her head scarcely reached to his shoulder Carlisle recognized in her swelling-hipped, full-bosomed figure the erect, agile, supple poise of her father. It showed in the curve and grace of her ankles and calves, encased in elk-skin moccasins and revealed by the short gray wool canoe skirt she wore. It showed, too, in the straight arms, whose swell of forearm and upper arm but enhanced the direct line of her limbs.

But her looks, he knew, she must have inherited from her mother. For here was no skin of swarthy shade or mahogany tan. Fair as Northland snows was the face revealed as she threw back the veil of mosquito netting 'round her head. Indeed, so pallid shone her complexion in contrast with her father's, that it seemed to be wanly bleached, and her hair, yellow, wheaten, and spun-gold all in one—like the mingling hues of birchen leaves in Autumn—seemed, against his brown hanging curls, to be likewise bleached.

But Carlisle was aware that the art of bleaching did not extend north to latitude fifty-four, and besides, the glow and sheen of both skin and hair told that they were natural, as natural as the lake-blue laughing eyes or the spray of crimson which tinged her cheeks at either side of the delicately chiseled nose.

"GRANDE PORTAGE at last, father!" she exclaimed, laughing so that her red lips parted whimsically, poutingly over splendid teeth. "It is good to get the canoe cramps out!"

"Yes, Joan," nodded her father, a smile cracking the grim mohogany of his face, "it's been a long day. But here's a nine-mile walk to stretch your legs."

"You've come far then, I take it," put in Father Andrews rising from the bundle upon which he sat and extending his hand to the frontiersman.

"From Fort Wayne on Sturgeon Lake," replied the other, returning his grip. "I'm Ralph Wayne the Free-Trader, and this is my daugher Joan. We're bound to Montreal. And you, I see by your netting, have followed the mosquito-pestered trail too. Where are you bound, Father?"

"But here," responded the priest, turning his head to see that none of the Northwesters were in hearing and speaking in a lower voice. "I am Father Andrews, and I've come with a warning. Richelieu and his partners have closed the Portage as private ground. They will seize you at the post. The partners want your trade, I understand, and Richelieu—well," with a nod aside at Joan, "Richelieu wants something else."

Into the fawn-green eyes in the mahogany gloom of Wayne's face blazed a light like the flare of lightning in a murky cloud. Instinctively his hand fell upon Joan's arm in a protecting gesture, his tall frame straightened another inch, and his sweeping mustaches began to quiver as a precursor of violent speech.

But Andrews was quick to forestall him.

"Be careful," the priest warned hurriedly, "be very careful. These Northwesters all know what is going to happen to you, but don't precipitate it by letting them know that you know. Is there any chance of your getting back up the Pigeon by a swift dash now? Are there any of their fleets afloat?"

"Two of their Winnipegosis brigades behind me," rasped Wayne in a voice virulent with bitterness and rage. "If things are as you say, they'll be notified too. There's no chance to pass them."

"Then there is nothing left to do but try for escape at the Superior end," decided Andrews. "You won't be able to count on your own men, since they'll be watched or overpowered, but you may count on me and these four behind me: the courier, the voyageur and the two Indians. Trust them as you would me!"

"Thank God for your kindness and your warning, Father!" breathed Wayne, turning in the middle of his words as if from some trivial conversation to loudly order his men to lift the canoes and adjust the fur bales in tump lines for packing over to Grande Portage. "Thank God for it, I say, on account of my girl. If we can manage to get her safely through, for the rest I do not care."

"But I do, father," declared Joan in a tremulous voice. "If I get through, you must too. Otherwise I don't want to."

And as the white men of Wayne's brigade, men of the Mississippi, men of the Missouri, men of the Red—independent-spirited adventurers like himself—together with his Crees and Chippewayans, shuffled off under their burdens of canoes and furs on the upgrade from Port Charlotte, the girl flashed a glance at the four whom Father Andrews had named as to be trusted.

"Tell me," she urged intensely, with the painful desire of one who will know the worst, "is there any real chance of getting through?"

Her beseeching eyes went past Drummond, past Missowa and Waseyawin as if the magnetic personality of Carlisle, hidden though it was, drew them to himself, and for the first time since he had assumed the courier's disguise the Factor silently cursed his masquerade.

"By heavens yes, a real chance," he swore fervently, "for rather than see harm come to you, I myself will sheathe a knife in Richelieu's heart!"

CHAPTER III

AN INTERRUPTED MARRIAGE SACRAMENT

CARLISLE and his men running empty-handed had loped over the Portage in a little better than an hour, but it was more than a two-hours' walk back for the laden brigade, and the laggard Summer dark came down as they neared the post. All the way across the two groups had kept well separated so as not to invite the notice or arouse the suspicions of the trooping Northwesters who at the end of their day's work were flocking back to Grande Portage, and in the ordinary routine of superintending the packing, Ralph Wayne had managed to let each member of his brigade know what to expect.

That no Northwester attempted to molest them yet or even speak to them further than to pass the customary greetings of the

trail did not make them any easier in mind, for it was plain that throughout every mile of the nine they were unostentatiously kept under vigilance. One large body straggled ahead of them, one behind them upon the winding path, and when they reached the square of the palisades they became aware that there were crowds of men as a preventive of flight between them and the open beach.

Instinctively the two groups which policy had kept separate now united against a common menace. Carlisle gradually worked his way to the head of the line, close to Joan Wayne, while Eugene Drummond, Missowa and Waseyawin glided silently at his back. Hard at their heels came the Free-Trader and the priest, themselves trailed by the thirty-odd brigade men bunching together under their packs of fur.

As they passed into the stockade a ribald clamor greeted them, sounds of men singing and shouting and roaring with laughter, all sharply punctuated by the explosive popping of corks and the crash of a shattered wine-glass on hard boards. The babel rose from a big residence building which they were skirting, and as Carlisle, the girl and the rest came into line with its row of open, lighted windows the brilliant scene within the dark-walled building flashed vividly upon their eyes.

Under flaring hanging lamps 'round many feasting tables, spread up and down the long hall, were gathered together one hundred or more officers of the Northwest Company, interpreters, guides, clerks, Wintering partners from the West meeting here the executive partners from the East, the most aggressive of the thirty-five lords of Beaver Hall.

Among the rows of faces Carlisle glimpsed many known to him, MacGillivray and Sager from Fond du Lac, Todd from Fort des Prairies, James McKenzie, Grant, McTavish and McLeod from English River and the Athabasca, McKay from the Swamp Country, Roderick McKenzie and the rest of his cronies from Montreal and lastly, Simon Richelieu, black-bearded of face, ramrod-like of figure, resplendent in the uniform of a French colonel, reckless, voluble, addressing half a dozen different persons at the same moment.

There they sat noisily devouring such epicurean marvels as bison's hump, moose's nose, beaver's tail, wassailing in the finest Italian, French and Spanish wines and flinging their souls out in laughter and song. But even as those outside gazed and passed the windows, the clamor stilled with strange abruptness. It was evident that a messenger had entered and spoken, that Wayne's unostentatious warders upon the Portage had communicated with their roistering overlords. The company rose in a body and, Simon Richelieu in the lead, poured out upon the steps and sand terrace of the building.

Richelieu stood upon the outer step, the lamplight falling upon his gay uniform, laughing like a sardonic devil in his black beard and bowing his ramrod body from the hips.

"Welcome, Ralph Wayne!" he chuckled. "Welcome, Mademoiselle Joan. The supper is ready. *Mon Dieu,* but I thought you were never coming!"

"The devil!" exclaimed Wayne, startled in spite of forewarning. "What does this pleasantry mean?"

"I'll tell you," spat Richelieu, the iron in him showing up through his levity as he shoved his brutal, domineering face into Wayne's. "I'll tell you, Ralph. For several years we have tried to buy your trade, which you switch in secret to the Hudson's Bay——"

"You lie, Richelieu!" thundered Wayne.

Richelieu, his face contorted, doubled up his arm as if to strike but with a glance at the girl thought better of it and flung out his open hand with a dramatic snap of the fingers.

"There! But I will have the Indian whippers whip that out of your hide in the post cellars to-night!"

"No, no, Colonel," cut in the voice of David Thompson who arrived suddenly out of nowhere and the dark, "wilt have no whipping in my post whilst I am keeper."

"*Ciel,* Thompson, but your tongue is ready! If it were not that we need your map-making I would have you drafted for that."

"But I knows 'ee do need tuh maps," nodded Thompson. "So wilst have no whippin in tuh cellars. Besides, would break tuh wine bottles."

"Well spoken, whatever, Davvy," grinned James McKenzie, while the company roared and Richelieu, himself catching the contagion, relaxed into laughter again at the public criticism of his own habits.

"Thompson, for that thrust I forgive you, and Ralph Wayne escapes," he chortled. "Are you not glad, Ralph? As I was saying, we need your trade, and so because it is easier to take you here than at Fort Wayne we do so. Also because Mademoiselle Joan would as usual flout me there I take her here where there is no flouting. Understand me? *Hola*—couriers, voyageurs, *mêtis* all—seize them!"

INSTANTLY Carlisle's arms were 'round Joan Wayne, making show of seizing her before any one else could touch her. And swift as he, Eugene Drummond, Missowa and Waseyawin laid rough hands on Wayne and held him fast. Seeing the principals apparently in the grasp of their own men, the rest of the Northwesters pounced in a body upon Wayne's laden brigade, and before they could drop their canoes and packs their arms were gripped from either side by many hands.

"Off to the cellars with the canoemen," ordered Richelieu, and pushing, fighting, cursing, making vain efforts to break from the grip of so many hands, Wayne's brigade swayed out into the dark.

"Now, Ralph Wayne, come and eat supper with me, you and Mademoiselle Joan, and see if a full stomach and a bottle of good wine will make you change your mind. If you show sense, you may come back to my Sturgeon Lake post with Joan and me. If you do not show sense, you will go to join your men in the cellars while Joan goes back alone with me."

The moment he heard the words, Father Andrews pushed through the crowd past his friends, elbowing his way to the front.

"Richelieu is half drunk," he whispered to them as he went. "They are all half drunk —all but Thompson. Mark my speech and follow my move!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Richelieu, staring at Andrews in surprise. "Who is this? But wait. I remember now. You are the Jesuit missionary who asked a night's shelter at the post." He gave Andrews a friendly hand. "Donald McKay spoke of you this afternoon, but I did not catch the name."

"Andrews!"

"*Par Dieu,* yes! I know more of that name than you think perhaps. How discourteous of me not to have inquired better. A famous name, Father, and a herald of deeds. I have heard of you for years. You go among the men of the rival Hudson's Bay, too, eh?"

"Chiefly to bury them," answered Andrews gravely.

"Ho! Ho! You are a wit, Father. I had heard that. You must join us in the meal. You must sit at my table with Mademoiselle and her father. *Comment?* Was there anything else you wanted?"

"I just wanted to ask about the maiden," parleyed the priest, calmly turning to Joan Wayne. "It occurred to me that she may not be willing to have you carry her off like a buccaneer to your Sturgeon Lake post."

"Ah! Mademoiselle is, Father, only she does not know that she is."

"I only know," flashed Joan with a hate and passion in her voice that bit like flame, "that as sure as you put out one finger to touch me, you will feel a knife in your heart."

But Richelieu roared in ridicule.

"*Ciel,* listen to that!" he pooh-poohed. "What a death from gentle hands! And, *par Dieu,* I believe it would be worth it. Would it not, Father Andrews? Name of a name, yes! I do not care to remember the number of months she has driven me crazy with her coy refusals and her floutings. And is she a mate to hide away or be ashamed of?

"*Diable,* just look at her there—just look! But come, my stomach's hungering for my unfinished supper, and I can't wait much longer. Come, Father; come all!"

"But it is not right for casual travelers to take up space at your tables to the exclusion of your own men who have worked hard all day," demurred Andrews to gain time. "Here are packers whom I see to be ravenous for their meal, and I who have cause to know something of hunger will keep no man waiting while I eat in his place."

"These do not eat with the officers," Richelieu pointed out, "and they do not all eat at once. Neither is their fare what ours is, although at the same time it is good enough for them."

"For them?" echoed Andrews. "Are we all not dwellers in the wilderness together? And is one man not as good as another? Richelieu, I have heard of you, even as you have heard of me, and I know you are no niggard. Therefore I ask a favor. It is a special occasion, so let these men eat at once with us and eat of the best you have. When strangers come, men keep an open board."

"*Mon Dieu*, no, I am no niggard," Richelieu boasted pompously. "I grudge them nothing, Father, for they serve me well, and they shall have what you say and all that you say. Only, none of the Grande Portage buildings will hold one-tenth of their number."

"True, yet the stockade ground here will hold them all," suggested Andrews, craftily straining for the point he wished to gain. "And it is lighted like day with the canoemen's fires on yonder beach. Have canoemen and all gather here to eat and let every man of your company see for himself how fair a mate sits at your table."

"*Ciel*, but you have spoken it, Father!" cried Richelieu, swallowing the bait offered to his conceit, to his love of pomp and display. "Thompson, send out the word to the beach for them all to gather within the stockades. They can sit on the steps and the sand terrace, and I will have them served with food and wine where they sit."

Thompson himself strode out of the stockade ground and moved amid the mob across the level sand beach toward the shoreway of the long canoe pier. At his word the canoemen, leaving their fires with joyous whoops over their good fortune, surged up the beach and into the stockade ground.

"Just when Richelieu turns to lead us in—run for the sloop!" was all Andrews had opportunity to whisper to Carlisle who, under Richelieu's watchful eye, still had Joan by the arms.

Carlisle passed the whisper to Eugene Drummond, Missowa and Waseyawin who likewise had their hands upon the Free-Trader, and they all felt their tense nerves thrill vibrantly as the last of the mob of canoemen came in through the gateway. It required only a slight shifting of their gaze to mark the eastern cribwork of the old canoe pier where the fur sloop *Otter*, empty after its run to the Falls of St. Mary, lightly rubbed its rail against the timbers.

The harbor water within the angle of the pier and also the curve of the sand beach nearer at hand were lined with canoes. The beach itself, starred with scores of campfires sending their crimson flares across the lake, was deserted as Andrews had schemed.

Here, stamping on the sand terrace, climbing on the steps were the men who had peopled it, eleven hundred and twenty enrolled canoemen—thirty-six brigades—the total strength of the Northwest Company's boatmen drawn from the world's outposts and massed together in one spot, three hundred and fifty Rabiscaw paddlers of Montreal, in company with all the countless Indians of the district gathered for the yearly trade, the carousal and the carnival.

Never had Carlisle gazed on so weird and motley a horde of Northmen and Indians and nowhere else on the continent could Richelieu have marshaled such a retinue. For these men Canada and the Atlantic States were only faint memories somewhere East. The Church for them was an impression fainter still. No man-made law had they ever seen forged farther than the Sault.

They drew breath in an unclaimed land, and rum and bedlam rioted in their hearts. Only their fear of Richelieu postponed their songs and their brawls as they jostled up for their unexpected feast, and in the moment of their silence, Richelieu raised his voice from the threshold of his dining hall.

"Ho! Northmen from the Pays d'en Haut, and you Rabiscaw paddlers from Montreal," he smirked. "*Voilà!* Here is a priest with a kind heart, and on his thoughtful suggestion I——"

The snoring surge of waters swiftly cloven, a triumphal yell out of the lakeward dark, the thump of a quickly-wielded paddle upon a canoe gunwale interrupted Richelieu, and the next instant a lone birch-bark craft tore through the water gate of the pier and spilled its single occupant upon the beach outside the stockade.

"Who in the devil are you?" bellowed Richelieu, glaring truculently as the intruder bounded in through the open gateway and drove like a wedge up the jammed steps.

"Bertand—Montreal mail courier—waylaid—just escaped from the Hudson's Bay men's camp down the north shore," panted the courier in French, his furtive eyes, filled with the streaming lamplight, scanning them over. "And there," leveling an excited finger at Carlisle, "is their Factor wearing my very clothes!"

CARLISLE, his left hand keeping its hold on the arm of Joan Wayne, launched his mighty body forward. His right foot shot into Bertand's chest, his right fist into the black beard of Richelieu, and both men, catapulted back off the steps, went rolling down the sand terrace among the massed men.

Swift as he struck he wheeled with the girl, to find that his companions had been equally quick. As one man they had vaulted over the railing of the steps, sheer over the heads of the crowd sitting on the terrace beneath, knocking flat a dozen in the outer rank who stood directly in the way.

Before they had fairly landed, Carlisle, gathering Joan in his arms, leaped after them. He alighted ankle-deep in the sand, plowing a furrow for yards in the loose, sugary grains, and without halting his impetus plunged for the opening in the stockade.

With a yell of exultation his five comrades clanged it behind him and dropped the bar in place on the outside just as the roaring avalanche of Northmen brought up against it. Then like fleeing deer they were across the beach, out on the pier and into the fur sloop *Otter*, Missowa and Waseyawin severing the hempen hawsers with their sheath knives, Drummond kicking loose the tiller and Wayne and the priest running up the big mainsail with a jerk.

The breeze had shifted at dark. It now blew steadily from the south, snoring in through the channel, and like a live, palpitant thing the vessel responded to its urge. They could see Richelieu's horde of Northmen climbing the eighteen-foot palisades and dropping to the ground outside, but before these could reach the water's edge the mainsail tightened with a clatter of blocks, the boom uprose and the *Otter* heeled over as she left the pier.

Ashore reigned bedlam, pandemonium, all the vast motley crowd shuttling crazily in the light of scores of fires, shouting, explaining, commanding and countermanding. Northwest officers were dashing out on the pier, yelling directions as they ran, McTavish, MacGillivray and Todd in the lead, and fragments of their shouts rang stridently on the ears of those in the boat upon the channel.

"——, off in the sloop!" McTavish was roaring. "Launch the canoes and stop them!"

"Condemned scoundrels, those four—" it was the shrill declamation of Todd—"and the rascally priest as well!"

And, loudest of all, the bull moose call of MacGillivray demanding of his partner—

"Sager, Sager, where in perdition are our Fond du Lac brigades?"

Into the huge Rabiscaw canoes they were madly urging the crews, all clamoring at once and spurred by the curses of Richelieu who with the Montreal mail-courier, Bertand, was running here and there like a madman, his uniform all dirty and his black beard filled with sticky sand as he spat forth French, English, Cree and Chippewayan in one breath.

But the Rabiscaws, even though manned by twenty paddles, could not beat the wind. The *Otter*, already in mid-channel, maintained her lead, rounded the island and tore like a racing yacht down the rugged loom of the north shore.

"Out of the desert into the mirage, as the Western saying goes!" breathed Joan, all her suspense and anxiety of the last few minutes finding an expression in a hysterical laugh.

"Yes," bantered Carlisle, "you were prisoners of the Northwesters. Now you are prisoners of the Hudson's Bay—with every prospect of improved treatment. We'll pick up my brigade at their camp down here and go on to the mouth of the Kaministiquia."

"So it's not a courier I have to thank after all but a Factor," she marveled whimsically. "And your men were in the masquerade, too!"

"As it happened," he admitted. "Drummond, at the tiller yonder, gave us warning on the lake, and it all worked out as you saw. Andrews was a marvel."

"He was that," put in Wayne warmly, "not to speak of yourself. I am not the man to forget such a service. To what post do you belong?"

"Lately to Moose Factory but to Cumberland House when I reach there."

"The devil! The Factor to fight us, eh? And your name?"

"Carlisle."

With an animal-like snarl Wayne let go the jib halyard and snatched the sheath knife from the belt of Missowa by his side. His face under the weak starlight was a veritable blaze of ferocity, and his fawn-green eyes shone like the eyes of a lynx as he lunged at Carlisle with the long steel blade.

"Stop, man, wait!" appealed Andrews, leaping as Wayne lunged.

But quick as was the priest to spring, Joan was quicker. She launched herself between her father and Carlisle, her hands

upon Wayne's striking arm, her whole weight bearing down upon it like a leaden clog.

"Father, you are mad!" she shrieked. "He has just saved us from Richelieu. You're forgetting the wilderness code. You can't touch him."

For a moment they swayed thus in the careening sloop under the reeling stars, Carlisle grimly amazed, vaguely angered, poised for resistance, Wayne suddenly frozen still in his fury, moving nothing but his fawn-green eyes in continual shift from the Factor to the beseeching girl on his arm. Then the Free-Trader's body relaxed with a sound like a groan as he allowed Joan to wrest the knife from his fingers and push him down to his seat.

"No, you're right, girl," he mumbled. "It's the code. I can't touch him—yet!"

Carlisle also sat down.

"By heavens," he sneered, sensing nothing but bitter trade antagonism, "I like your knife-edged gratitude!"

But Eugene Drummond, replacing the long sweep he had unshipped to crash down upon the Free-Trader's head from behind, sensed something deeper. It was the *diable* mystery he had always sensed! Here it was darker than ever. Andrews knew of it. Wayne knew of it. The Factor did not know. That was plain.

Eugene shook his raven hair this way and that and swore darkly into the driving wind as he brought the *Otter* back on her course.

For, *mon Dieu*, had he not seen enough to know that between the names Wayne and Carlisle there was hate or fear or wrong, blood-feud or crime or worse?

CHAPTER IV

AMBUSCADE

THEIR weapons in their hands, the Hudson's Bay men started up from their camp on the north shore as Drummond steered the *Otter* in, half a dozen hands let go the sheets and Carlisle himself sprang out into their midst.

"By a' the wilderness gods, Factor, what's happened noo?" cried Lewis. "Why are ye back? Who are yer prisoners? An' what in the de'il are ye daein' wi' the Northwesters' sloop? I kenned at first it was a drunken crew o' the French Company led by yon slippery courier Bertand!"

"I'm back, Lewis," laughed Carlisle, "because Richelieu and his partners are in too great force at Grande Portage and the Kaministiquia is the only other route into the West. These with me are Ralph Wayne, the Sturgeon Lake Free-Trader, and his daughter Joan who thought the Hudson's Bay Company men better warders than the Northwesters. And we stole the sloop in order to escape. We'll beach it somewhere up the Kaministiquia. I have to get into the Pays d'en Haut with all speed. Things have come to a head now on the Saskatchewan."

"Shades o' Rupert, ye are sayin' so, Factor?" blurted Lewis, nodding to Wayne and doffing his Glengarry cap to Joan. "Tae a heid?"

"Yes, to a head," repeated Carlisle, "and the quicker I am on the ground the better. Who let Bertand the courier away?"

"Yon hound o' a Chippewa, Cotameg! Cotameg was his warder, ye ken, an' he dozed lang enough tae let the courier roll ower tae the mosquito smudge an' burn the thongs frae his wrists an' ankles."

"Fine him three months' pay," was Carlisle's swift judgment. "If the like happens again, he leaves the service. Understand, Lewis? Now strike camp at once!"

The *Otter* took them all aboard, men, dunnage and canoes, and bore away for the mouth of the Kaministiquia River. Before daylight they made it, tacked about in the face of a strong head wind and through the dark ran unseen past the sleeping Northwest post. On up the river they scudded till with the first streak of dawn the *Otter* grounded in rapid-broken shallows.

Carlisle leaped out and caught his gear bag tossed from the hands of Drummond.

"Eugene," he ordered, "have the canoes loaded and all ready to go on while I get rid of these courier's clothes."

He disappeared into a thicket up the shore and in a few minutes appeared again, the swarthy stain washed from his face and hands, the battered, blue felt hat, cheap cotton shirt and trousers gone. He was his old self once more, clad in his cap of soft amber leather, rich blanket-coat, deerskin knickerbockers and high-cut moccasins, and with the assumption of his own garments he had immediately assumed the greater exclusiveness of his rank.

Above all others in the brigade he loomed large on the conception, calm, self-reliant,

determined, the reckless impulse of youth within him curbed by an ancient wisdom, his whole personality, manner, speech, invested with unostentatious dignity, surcharged with irrevocable authority.

As he walked down to the shallows where Joan Wayne and her father awaited the preparations of the brigade, the girl gave an involuntary exclamation. She had expected some change in his appearance but not such a change as this.

Great as was the difference between the status of courier and Factor, just so great was the difference she saw, and the spray of red in her cheeks deepened and ran riot as she remembered the grip of his arms 'round her in Grande Portage and the ring of his voice as he swore he would save her from Richelieu.

But her father at her side was in no such pleasant attitude of mind. Joan, glancing at him, saw his face working with an emotion that was nothing less than terrible.

"Charlie Carlisle!" he was reiterating in a low, snarling tone. "Charlie Carlisle all over again!"

"Paul Carlisle, father!" corrected Joan, laying a hand on his arm to quiet him. "Paul, I heard Father Andrews call him. Be calm, won't you? He's our enemy in trade only, and why should you make it such a bitter personal hate?"

"You don't know what you are talking about, girl," growled Wayne, "you don't know. By the Doom—the image of his father before him!"

Wayne's hand went to his waist, clutching for the weapon that was not there. As his fingers fumbled helplessly, he seemed to remember his present plight and with a curse abruptly turned his back.

"All ready, Eugene?" called Carlisle cheerfully.

"*Oui*, Factor," assured Drummond, sweeping an expressive hand over the fleet. "All ready for start. I be got to double oop two crews in dese canoes on account dose crafts Fadder Andrews an' Bertand left on Grande Portage."

WITH Garry as steersman, Eugene himself had taken charge of one of these canoes, the second in the line, where from its bow he could command the whole brigade, and the fact that in so short a time every bit of dunnage was trimmed for balance, every paddler in his proper position, bespoke his keen efficiency.

Behind him, one in charge of each separate craft, were the three white men, Lewis, Hampton and Lea. Ahead of him floated the splendid six-fathom canoe of the Factor, lipping a flat rock in the shallows, waiting for its owner, its crimson flag and gonfalon crackling as before, the gay woolen streamers blowing from the paddle shafts and the paddlers themselves poised in their bright costumes of gaily-decorated moccasins, leggings, sashes, fillets and plumes.

And gayest of all posed Waseyawin and Missowa, standing in the high, curved bow and stern, their common disguises thrown aside to let the wilderness world know their rank as bowsman and steersman.

Carlisle's eye glistened with pride as he glanced them over, but with only a momentary dwelling his gaze passed on to Wayne and his daughter.

"Now it comes to your decision," he spoke bluntly yet in the spirit of earnest friendliness. "I can double up another crew and spare you a canoe to go on to Montreal as you intended. You may walk down the bank to the Kaministiquia post. Or you may come back with me to Cumberland House. In the first two cases you go freely. In the third case you will be in custody."

Wayne's eyes held Carlisle's with a blazing gleam. His whole intense being seemed to leap out in that bitter gaze, leaving his lips no mission in speech, and it was Joan, tremulous and fearful of his wrath, who hastily answered for him.

"There is no use in our going on to Montreal," she pointed out. "The furs are gone —a sixty thousand-dollar cargo. Besides, neither I nor my father wants to risk going into Northwest headquarters after what happened at Grande Portage. You know that."

"Yes, I judged so," nodded Carlisle. "Then it's the Kaministiquia post or Cumberland House. And I hope it's Cumberland House. You see, white women are so scarce in this land that a man does not meet and part with them lightly. Good heavens! I spent four years in London, and there was a woman there for every square rod of the city.

"I've lived seventeen years in wilderness posts and in all that time seen very few. Do you understand? It's made me appreciate them wonderfully, and somehow, now when I look at you, I'm—I'm—well,

frankly, I'm glad that I've seen but few!"

Joan flushed at his patent warmth.

"But it's for my father to say," she evaded in confusion.

"It's Cumberland House," cut in Wayne suddenly finding speech and taking Carlisle's option as if he had heard nothing that intervened. "Condemnation! Why should we rot in the Kaministiquia post? We will go back to our own district, Joan, the district they would wrest from us, and there, by the Doom, they'll see who does the wresting!"

"You'll give parole?" asked the Factor, ignoring the threat.

"No," thundered Wayne. "Put a guard on us and keep us if you can!"

"Very well," nodded Carlisle grimly, "my eyes will be guard enough."

He took a step aside to where Father Andrews waited silently on the bank.

"A strange, violent man, Father—yes, and bitter as gall against the Hudson's Bay!" he whispered. "If it were not for the girl's sake, I would give him back some of his own medicine. She interests me greatly. So will you pair amidships with Wayne, then? The girl and I will sit behind you."

"As you like Paul," agreed the priest, taking the indicated place. "I am glad you have your temper under control. There is no gain in letting it slip."

Carlisle gave Joan his hand as she stepped in, but when he motioned the Free-Trader to follow, the latter drew back defiantly.

"I ride in the next," he growled. "I will not ride with you. Though you've put me under the code, my hands still itch for the Ojibways' knives."

"All right, if you feel like that," assented the Factor.

He waved Wayne aboard Drummond's craft.

"Eugene," he enjoined, "he is under your eye!"

Then he stepped into his own canoe, meeting with a good-humored laugh Joan's deprecatory face. Rendered ashamed, as well as alarmed, by her father's fresh defiance, she had remained standing, perturbed, uncertain as to the outcome of the verbal clash. Now quite naturally they sat down together upon the rich ermine robe, and the brigade shot up the Kaministiquia.

In the wake of La Verendrye whose prow had first cut these waters in 1731 they went, and as the silence of the forest enveloped them Eugene Drummond's clear tenor struck up an air to time the paddles of his canoemen.

All day and half the night the fleet wound up the rock-walled, spruce-hedged Kaministiqua to its source, Lake Shebandowan, across golden Shebandowan, over jeweled Lake Kashaboyes toward the range of granite which hurled the Western waters back to Winnipeg.

The setting sun did not drop behind the gray crags of the range till nine in the evening, and then the orange-rose afterglow burned its witch-light for an hour more. But abruptly as the orange-rose turned saffron stalked the jealous dark, and night and the brigade camped together upon the crest of the Superior Divide.

At morning they left the Height of Land behind them, and like the flash of their paddles the days went by as they plunged down the western slope of the watershed through Lac des Mille Isles, the Seine River, Rainy Lake, Rainy River and Lake of the Woods. All the way by paddle, pole and portage Eugene Drummond pitched the canoe song for his gay-souled voyageurs.

Ralph Wayne's glowering hate grew darker as he hit upon no opportunity to escape, and the strangely-begun intimacy between Joan and Carlisle blossomed and thrived at a pace that set her father to brooding. Stately figures upon the vast tapestry of forest verdure they passed with no untoward incident until after leaving Lake of the Woods.

THEN as they rounded a bend of the Winnipeg River some miles above Lac du Bonnet, Waseyawin uttered a cry of warning from the bow of the Factor's flying canoe. Instantly Missowa and the middlemen caught it. Their blades back-watered with a gurgling roar, and the prow of the craft brought up within ten feet of a chaos of dead tamarack trunks which choked the stream.

"A windfall, eh?" cried Father Andrews. "That was a close thing, Paul."

"No—no windfall!" declared Carlisle, standing up to see better. "Look at the ax marks on the butts. It's a barricade. Missowa, Waseyawin—back! Back, Drummond—quick!"

But hard on his words and before the

brigade had time to swing about came the chug-chug of axes behind them. A score of dead birches swayed out from the bushy margin and crashed into the river in an impassable tangle of crossed trunks and interwoven branches. And out upon the barricades before and behind poured over one hundred Northwesters, the choppers with their bright-bladed axes still in hand, the others with long-barreled rifles trained on the Hudson's Bay brigade.

Carlisle recognized on the instant James and Roderick McKenzie, McLeod and McDougall with their returning Athabasca brigades, and Richelieu with his Sturgeon Lake brigade, all apparently bound into the Pays d'en Haut.

"*Mon Dieu*, Carlisle, but I have you trapped now!" roared Richelieu. "You and Ralph Wayne and mademoiselle and your renegade priest!"

"Yes, Carlisle," guffawed Roderick McKenzie. "I had thought you too good a woodsman to put your head into a deadfall like that!"

"Never mind your tongue play, you two," the impetuous McLeod cut in on them. "Take these men prisoners, lift their arms, clear yon barricade and let's be on our way!"

"In my own good time, McLeod," bullied Richelieu. "Neither you nor any other man can hurry me. You see, Carlisle, you've tried the patience of McLeod and the others. The Pigeon River route into the Lake of the Woods is faster than the Kaministiquia route and, *par Dieu*, we've waited for you here longer than we've liked. *Comprenez-vous?* Do you surrender quietly?"

Carlisle, sweating in the sun-heat off the river which seemed suddenly to have grown more intense, cast swift, calculating glances to right, to left, and behind.

"Surrender?" he echoed, trying to gain time by parleying and all the while seeking for some means of apparently impossible escape. "What under heaven do you Northwesters set yourselves up to be? Even though your claim to Grande Portage holds good—and I tell you bluntly that it doesn't—this is not Grande Portage. This is the Winnipeg—the West, and I want to ask you by what right you stop any traveler on Winnipeg waters?"

"By the right of might, *m'sieu'*," answered Richelieu insolently. "We have our secret service also, and we know your mission into the Saskatchewan. *Ciel*, do you think I am fool enough to let you go on to Sturgeon Lake when I have the chance to cut you off here? It was my plan to take you at Grande Portage, but there was a slip. I lost track of you for a little—until the courier Bertand exposed you.

"*Diable*, I have not forgotten your masquerade, nor the blow you gave me. For everything you will answer *toute suite*, Carlisle—*oui*, and mademoiselle will come back where she belongs."

Through every word of Richelieu's tirade, Carlisle felt his face fairly crisping with the increasing heat. He put his feeling down to the well-nigh unbearable suspense of the moment and to the fact that they lay motionless upon the sun-refracting water in windless air held stagnant by the forested shores. But as Richelieu finished his bold prophecy, a sharp tang, permeating the heat wave, stung Carlisle's sensitive nostrils.

"Smoke!" he exclaimed hoarsely to the others in the canoe. "Is that another trick of these curs?"

McDougall, up on the loftiest log of the barricade, caught the tang at the same moment. He whirled suddenly to face downstream.

"Holy Dog-Ribs," he shouted. "Look—Richelieu, look! The whole forest's on fire!"

McDougall pointed aghast where, not over five hundred yards away, as far 'round the river bend as he could see, a black pall rolled up above the tamarack tops along both banks and shooting flames darted like red, horned devils between the dark trunks.

"*Diablement*," Richelieu swore. "Some of your careless whelps have dropped match or pipe, McDougall! Run, everybody, run! In canoes and up-stream! And, *mon Dieu*, paddle for your cursed lives!"

He himself led the rout before the charging flames, plunging headlong from the barricade into the thicket of green where they had hidden their canoes when they arranged the ambuscade. Like madmen the hundred of them ripped and tore through the growth, bending, chopping, trampling down obstructing saplings and shoving their crafts afloat above the upper barricade.

"Name of a name, come on," yelled Richelieu, as the paddles foamed away. "Carlisle — Wayne — Joan *chère* — all you there, *hola!* Follow us. It's your only chance."

"What do you think, Drummond?" snapped Carlisle feverishly. "Follow and be captured or try to run through the fire?"

"Ba gar," breathed his brigade leader, "she's so hot I'm t'ink we burn to cinder. Still de smoke she seem to start close. Mabbe I be take wan look an' see. If de rivaire be smokin' for miles we nevaire do it. If she's shallow fire mebbe we make de dash."

In an attempt to gage the depth of the conflagration Eugene leaped out upon the barricade, but as he thrust a bronzed face over the topmost trunk, another face was thrust into his from the other side, a brown-bearded, long-jawed plainsman's face, weather wrinkled and alkali seared, the yellowed teeth jarred apart in a triumphant grin.

"Mason!" exclaimed Joan Wayne in an odd high-pitched tone.

"By the Doom—yes, Mason!" echoed her father.

And Carlisle, Drummond, Andrews, Missowa and Waseyawin suddenly remembered him, one of the Missouri men, Wayne's brigade leader, whom they had last seen in the grip of the Northwesters as they dragged him and his companions off to the cellars of Grande Portage.

"Come on," implored Mason frantically. "My pardners fired her back a bit to skeer them cusses off. 'Twas the only sartin way we seen. Come on. Ye kin run through her!"

The Missourian had an ax in his hand, and even while he implored he brought it into play upon the up-thrusting branches of the barricading trees, slashing a three-foot passageway down to the water level.

There was neither time nor need to cut the floating trunks. At a command from Carlisle the whole brigade swarmed out upon them, the six canoes were whipped from the water, passed through the gap and launched on the other side.

"All aboard!" shouted Carlisle. "Now—wet blankets on your heads and paddle like very demons!"

He swiftly set the example, soaking a blanket overside and drawing it as a protecting canopy over the girl, the priest and himself.

"That's the trick!" approved Mason who had tumbled in beside Wayne in Drummond's canoe. " 'Twould be a turrible sin to scorch yon ha-ar of Joan's. It's a short run, boys, but hot as Hades!"

FLYING down-stream into the face of the flame, the heat struck them with magnified force, like a searing furnace blast. Either bank was a moving wall of fire, sputtering and shrieking in a medley of impish voices: flare of dry leaves, crackle of underbrush, sizzle of green pine-needles, pop of resinous knots, crash of half-consumed stubs and the patter, plop and hiss of embers ceaselessly raining upon shore rocks and river surface.

And all these lesser voices blended as separate notes into a symphony of vast volume, of awesome power, the Gargantuan roar of the fire giant bellowing a thunderous diapason.

Carlisle felt the blanket on his head grow warm and commence to steam. He breathed in gasps in the stifling heat and smoke, the blood pounding so hard in his head as to make him dizzy. He wondered if Joan would faint in that inferno, and he blindly put out his hand toward her to reassure himself. His fingers touched and closed on hers, burning fever-hot beneath the blanket folds.

"A moment more and we'll be through, Joan," he cheered.

Joan had one hand covering her mouth as an additional safeguard against the smoke, but her fingers tightened on his in answer, and the grip sent a fierce thrill through his frame.

"The devil!" boomed the cavernous voice of Lewis somewhere behind. "We're gaein' doon!"

At the cry Carlisle threw back a corner of the blanket in time to see Lewis' canoe disappear suddenly, leaving its four occupant swimming with the current. The terrific heat had melted the pitch on the birch-bark seams, letting in the water as into a sieve.

"Gae on," Lewis urged. "Dinna stop for us. It's muckle cooler swimmin'."

Before the man of the Hebrides and his Indians had taken a dozen strokes in the water, down went Hampton's canoe, and twelve heads now dotted the river surface, diving, reappearing and diving again to escape the blistering breath of the flames. Lea's craft, waterlogged and careening, promised to follow suit, but Drummond's heavily-laden canoe still flew like an arrow, and the Factor's canoe ahead, likewise heavily-laden so that its seams lay mainly under water, traveled as yet unharmed.

Flying canoes and racing fireline were meeting at tremendous speed, but as if the fireline were standing still, the faster creatures of the forest broke from cover and passed the whizzing canoes. Like scurrying Autumnal leaves the lesser birds flew through the rolling smoke pall.

Wedges of geese and ducks drove by on whistling wings. Coveys of partridges flushed with a drum-like roaring. Palpitant hares spurned the ground in fear-mad leaps. Squirrels, chattering, demented, hurled themselves across the latticework of branches. The lordly caribou, antlers back and noses outstreched, crashed upstream like bombshells through the forest growth.

Amid a demoniacal tumult of earth and air they struck the fireline. A mass of blazing limbs whirled down and lodged on the bow of the Factor's canoe. Like tinder the dry birch-bark flared up, but Waseyawin, bare-handed, cast the burning débris off and with a scoop of his paddle dashed a gallon of water on the flaring bow.

The blaze sputtered out with a malignant hiss. The Cree dug in his blade, and the next moment the craft leaped out of the seething inferno into a strangely-quiet reach of stream where the smoking, ash-filmed ground lay white as snow and the blackened trees slid by like specters winking red-hot eyes at every puff of wind.

CHAPTER V

THE ILIAD OF THE FOREST

"JOAN, are you burned at all?" demanded Carlisle, throwing the half-charred blanket aside. "Scorched even? Hair—face—hands?"

The girl drew the sweet, smokeless air into her lungs with a gasp.

"No, Paul, no," she assured him. "The flames never touched me. Are you all right—and my father and Father Andrews and the rest?"

"All safe, apparently! There'll be singed heads and blistered skins for a while, but everybody's come through fine."

"Aye," murmured Father Andrews, "they have—by the grace of God."

"And Mason," supplemented Wayne from Drummond's canoe behind.

"By Jove, yes, by grace of Mason too!" Carlisle lauded. "If it hadn't been for Mason we might not have tried to run the gantlet."

"That's what I was thar fer, to give ye the word," grinned Mason. "Ye see, they had a celebrashun fer the McKenzies, McLeod, McDougall and Richelieu when they left Grande Portage fer the Athabasky. Everybody got roarin' drunk, and somebody left the bar off the door of our cellar.

"Thompson dropped a word about ye gittin' away, Wayne, with Hudson's Bay men bound into the Saskatchewan, so on course we got out of the cellar at dark and stole canoes, rifles and grub to last and follered them drunk cusses up the Pigeon. We figgered yer party'd come in by the Kaministiquia, and we soon seen Richelieu figgered so too. They traveled like hell-fire, aimin' to head ye off and git to the Winnipeg River first.

"They done it all right and barricaded her and lay by fer two days, and when they bushwhacked ye jist now we had to chase them with fire. She'll heel them miles back to the Pechilaux and Red Sand Rivers comin' in on either bank. She'll stop thar, I calkilate. Hullo! Thar's my men on the shore. Time too, fer this cussed canoe's goin' down."

Lea's craft had already gone. Drummond's settled by the river margin amid all the swimmers from the other crafts, and all pulled themselves out dripping upon the ashy shore where waited Wayne's men of the Mississippi, men of the Missouri, men of the Red, along with his Stony Crees and Chippewayans.

Wayne stamped the water off as he made his way along the bank to the Factor's canoe, still sound and strong, where it lay grazing the river rocks.

"Well," he laughed grimly, his fawn-green eyes glowing into Carlisle's where the latter sat amidships, "fire is always a man's friend if it's properly used, and I guess it's my friend right here."

"You mean——"

"Of course I mean that. I'm the Big Chief now, and it's my turn to powwow. Your crew of six have their arms left. The arms of all the other crews are at the Winnipeg's bottom. You can't stand up against my thirty-two armed men. So tell your paddlers to step out with their hands up!"

"*Wiki Wiki!*" Carlisle yelled sharply to his crew.

Swift as lightning they dipped their

paddles in a terrific drive. The great canoe leaped its own length like a spurred horse and sheered off into mid-river.

"Stop!" Wayne bellowed. "Rapide des Boisfranc's just below. You can't run it. It's never been run. By the Doom, before you'll drown my girl I'll——"

He broke off to snatch a rifle from the hands of the nearest man and level it at the canoe.

"Carlisle—stop! Stop, or I'll shoot you like a skunk!"

But at the menace of the rifle muzzle Joan sitting on Carlisle's left hand, sprang up as a shield between.

"Father, don't fire," she implored. "You forget—you forget!"

"I forget nothing. Sit down, girl—sit down, I say."

Joan did not sit down, but a lurch of the canoe in the eddies set her swaying so that Carlisle pulled her down. The action put their bodies out of line where they sat, and instantly Wayne's rifle cracked. Carlisle heard the rip of the puncturing ball through the canoe from side to side above the waterline, and at the same moment he felt a solid blow, like the thud of a stone, on his left leg below the knee.

Blankly surprised, he looked down, to see the calf of his high-cut deerskin moccasin punctured from side to side as neatly as the birch-bark skin of the canoe. Blood was spreading over his leg and trickling down the creamy deerskin to his ankle. Hastily he thrust the wounded limb under a dunnage bag before Joan should see.

Missowa twisted the stern and flung the craft cleanly across the river bend so that a rock shoulder intercepted Wayne's line of fire. They were round the bend, swinging into the grip of the powerful, tugging current writhing down to Rapide des Boisfranc.

Wayne's Free-Traders had hidden their own canoes in the forest below the rapid, ready for hasty flight when they crept up the shore to spoil Richelieu's ambuscade. Now those in the racing Factor's canoe could hear them clamoring as they crashed along over the mile portage in a vain attempt to overtake the craft before it could reach white water.

"Oh, my father shouldn't have fired that way," censured Joan, still unaware of Carlisle's wound, "for he might have killed you, Paul! He's not himself. I swear he's not himself. He's mad with an enmity I've never seen him hold before—with a hate that's quite beyond me!"

"I know," nodded Carlisle, turning a grimace of pain into a smile, "and you see how impossible it was for me to let myself be taken prisoner. I'm sorry, Joan, to have to hurl you through these infernal rapids, but it can't be helped now. We can't stop to land you. You'll have to hold on tightly and keep your weight as low as possible. Now, take your grip. Yonder's white water ahead!"

WITH terrific speed they were shooting down the black, ominous surges at the head of the rapids, surges twisting and writhing like a brood of mighty pythons between the crowding walls of rock. Fast as the river ran, the craft was running faster, flung bodily ahead of the mad current by the desperate paddles of Waseyawin, Missowa and the four middle men.

Not for an instant might they allow the river's velocity to approximate the canoe's velocity, because in that instant control would be lost to their blades and disaster ensue.

Half a dozen canoe lengths from the foaming snarl of white water the bowsman, Waseyawin, gave a high-pitched yell as a signal. At his cry the tremendous speed of the paddle strokes abruptly doubled till it seemed some deep magic and not the skill of men which plied blades that the quick eye could scarcely follow.

The canoe was fairly torn from the suck of the dark water and launched like a meteor through the white. Waseyawin gave another yell. As one man the four middlemen shipped paddles, leaving Waseyawin and Missowa, standing at bow and stern, to twist the huge craft this way or that.

Waseyawin, eyes focused on the moil below, read the river as white men read a book, and ever his high-pitched yells split the tumult of the waters, drifting back to Missowa in the stern, telegraphing him what lay ahead—tossing billow, seething white water, angry eddy, treacherous cross current, fountained spray that marked the jagged rock or shallow foam that masked the sunken boulder.

Through a mist of flying drops they rocked over the edge of the cascade proper and plunged sheer down a milk-white chute as steep as a flight of stairs.

Nerved as she was by her father's training against all Northland menaces, Joan felt her spirit quaking at the sickening drop. Nausea dulled her senses. Terror gripped her heart. She shrank from the roaring brutal maw of the river, shrank from its slaver and fangs, pressing tremblingly closer and closer to Carlisle.

"My God—my God," she quavered as they struck the base swells of the cascade with a tearing sound like the ripping of a thousand yards of silk, "are we gone, Paul?"

"No, Joan, we're all right," Carlisle soothed. "We'll go through. If I hadn't full faith in my Indians, do you think I would have risked it with you?"

He loosened his grip and like a child he drew her shrinking body into the hollow of his arms.

"I wouldn't have risked it, Joan," he declared. "I haven't found you that long to lose you so soon. Don't you understand, girl? Can't you realize what finding you back there at Grande Portage has meant to me?"

The frightened face upturned to his, the face blanched of its customary color, lost the rigidity of terror, grew mellow, warm, sprayed with its crimson again, and her eyes deepened under some potent emotion to an amethyst shade. In the grip of the colossal elemental forces, heaving through a boiling caldron on the edge of death, her feminine finesse that under other circumstances would have kept him at bay, tantalized, in doubt, was torn away and to her lips of no denial, Carlisle on wild impulse suddenly pressed his own.

A barrel of water shipped over the bow when the canoe buried its nose in the grand swell drenched them both as it rolled from end to end.

"Bail!" Carlisle commanded the middlemen.

With a mighty trembling the canoe shook itself free and, aided by the increased buoyancy as the shipped water was flung out, rose upon the silver-gray backs of the swells, tobogganed down a series of fluid terraces and shot between two madly-gyrating whirlpools studded with stump-like rocks.

Once more Waseyawin uttered a violent yell. The four paddles of the middlemen came down into the swirl, and though the giant tentacles of the twin maelstroms gripped and tore at the craft like the arms of a gigantic devil-fish, the added impetus carried them through.

They were in the leaping, lashing billows near the end of the rapids. A few more strokes meant calmer water, but squarely in the path showed a half-sunken boulder, round, wave-worn, dark-green in color, standing like some Titan warrior of old taking upon his bruised face the eternal hammering of the river!

Swiftly Waseyawin jabbed his paddle deep under the bow to swing wide, but the already strained paddle snapped like a dead branch in his hands. The head of the canoe swerved back toward the rock. Missowa the steersman, taking the opposite stroke to Waseyawin's, in the pivotal shift, could not throw the stern 'round far enough to clear, and before the middleman behind Waseyawin could hand him his paddle in place of the broken one, the craft reared upon the boulder.

A grating sound ran along the bottom, and the thin birch-bark heaved in the center. All in a flash they lodged, whirled half-way 'round, were spewed off, to bring up with a drifting smash among a litter of granite blocks lying like thrown dice in the shore shallows. The canoe pitched on its side, spilling its occupants headforemost into the rubble-filled pools, and the first ones out of the tangle were Waseyawin and Missowa.

Crying to their middlemen to salve the canoe, packs and arms, they rushed to the aid of the whites. Father Andrews, in water to his waist and weighted by his soaked cassock, was slowly making his way ashore. Carlisle lay motionless in a foot of water, his head upon a stone, with Joan bending over him.

"He's stunned," she gasped as Missowa and Waseyawin reached her. "See the bruise there on his temple? His leg is hurt and bleeding as well. Carry him ashore quickly."

For answer Missowa whipped the gay sash from his waist over her mouth, while Waseyawin seized her wrists and tied them behind her back with the fillet from his head.

"Be quick, my Cree brother," urged Missowa, deftly knotting the gag. "The Free-Trading men must not find us here."

He pushed the girl up the bank in Waseyawin's charge and, exerting all his lithe strength, raised the limp form of the Factor

and followed. Father Andrews splashed out on his heels, and after the priest ran the four middlemen, carrying the arms and packs and rent canoe upon their heads.

They left no dripping water trail if any one should search, for the rocks for yards around were wet with the spray of the rapids, and once off the rocks they staggered up the granite bed of a little spring that trickled the length of a deep ravine.

AT THE head of the ravine they clambered over lichened stones, dank moss carpets and beds of fern as green as chrysoprase. Through the gloom of the pines, treading soundless as ghosts upon the fallen needles, they passed and came out on rolling ground forested with silvery birch.

They had worked over half a mile from the river, and in a tiny clearing Missowa let down his burden upon a bed of dry leaves. Waseyawin pushed Joan to a seat upon a mossy rock beside and, taking a rifle from the middlemen who crowded up, glided back to keep watch upon the river.

Father Andrews seized one of the packs and from it extracted the medicine kit he was accustomed to carry in his ministering among the Indians. It contained a flat tin flask full of brandy, and, using the screw-cap, the priest poured a few spoonfuls between Carlisle's lips and began to chafe him while Missowa cut away the water-soaked, blood-stained moccasin from his leg.

"A flesh wound," announced the Ojibway unemotionally, baring the calf and manipulating the leg to feel for a break. The bones are sound."

"That's good!" Andrews exclaimed. "I was afraid the jagged rocks had broken it clean."

"But, Ayumeaookemou (priest), it was not the rocks."

"Ah-hah! What then?"

"It was the Free-Trader's bullet, and had it not been for the twist of my paddle, it would have been through the Factor's heart!"

Father Andrews gave a startled exclamation. His eyes met Missowa's, fell to the bullet-torn limb and then shifted quickly to Joan's face. He and Missowa had been talking in Cree, but he realized all at once that she understood the language. She could not speak for the sash over her mouth, yet into her eyes flooded a silent eloquence, surprise, commiseration, anxiety —yes, something deeper, Andrews thought!

She rose from the rock. One of the middlemen made as if to stop her, but the priest shook his head, and she came and stood behind while they worked upon Carlisle. For nearly an hour they persisted before he showed signs of returning consciousness. Missowa had the leg bathed, the bullet-rip rinsed with pure water from a spring near-by, poulticed with healing balsam gum, brought from the ridge beyond the clearing, and all neatly bandaged before the Factor's eyes opened.

When they did open upon the mask-like mosquito veil of the priest, upon Missowa's swarthy face with the surface lights in the black eyes gleaming in solicitation almost akin to tenderness, upon Joan standing there in her gag and bonds, Carlisle felt himself still in the nightmare of the canoe smash.

"Wha—at—what under the—" he began in shaky syllables.

"Don't talk too loud," warned Father Andrews. "We're hidden here from the Free-Traders, and voices carry far in the forest."

"The Free-Traders are gone," spoke the voice of Waseyawin who glided like a wraith out of the gloom of the pines. "They came searching at the foot at the rapids. They found all our paddles, the nose-cloth of the Golden Daughter and one pack that was washed away. It was the nose-cloth that set Shining Horns to weeping."

"They think the canoe sunk and all of us drowned?" demanded Carlisle.

"So," answered Waseyawin. "The grief of Shining Horns was terrible to see. I think he would have cast himself into the whirlpool had not others led him away. They dared not wait long, these others, for fear of the French Company's men behind. They went on with our own men as prisoners in their canoes, and it is well they went, because Black-beard and his followers came after. I waited to see if that would come to pass before I left my watch."

"Your eyes are good, my Cree brother," eulogized Missowa, "even as good as your paddle in white water. Now that Shining Horns and his men are gone Golden Daughter may be freed."

With deft hands the Ojibway unknotted the sash and whipped it back on his waist, at the same time handing Waseyawin the fillet for his head.

"Oh, my poor father!" cried Joan, tears in her eyes. "He'll be half-crazed. And Richelieu may catch him yet upon the river."

"How much start had he, Andrews?" asked Carlisle.

"About an hour," informed the priest.

"Then Richelieu won't catch him, Joan," decided the Factor. "Once warned,Wayne is not the man to be overtaken. He'll have a scouting craft out behind his brigade. If hostile canoes are reported, he can leave the river the same as we did. So don't worry. Your father will be safe, all right, and we'll bring you back to him as sound as ever at Sturgeon Lake."

"But yourself, Paul," she burst out, impetuously dropping to her knees beside him, "your own hurts——"

"I'm all right," checked Carlisle with a smile. "There's nothing the matter with me but a good headache and a gash in the leg that a spiked branch might have made."

"Yet how can you forgive me my father's intent?"

"You know why, don't you?" he murmured so low that the others could not hear. "Besides, he fired out of desperate fear for you, as any one—as I myself would have done. Don't you worry, girl, but hurry and dry your clothes. The Indians will have a shelter ready for you in a few minutes. Missowa, Waseyawin," addressing his familiars, "bid the middlemen make three bough camps and small fires in front that will not smoke above the tree-tops. Also gather and cook the evening meal."

Very soon the shelters were ready and occupied, one by each of the three whites, shelters consisting simply of circles of forked saplings thrust into the ground like teepee poles, overlaid with balsam boughs and floored with the same. In the opening glowed heaps of charred fragments taken from blackened tree trunks and stumps, the remains of former forest fires.

In the central space of the clearing Waseyawin had kindled another cooking fire. Missowa had taken the middlemen off to set a length of gill net in the river and hunt the evergreens for grouse. Presently these returned with both finned and feathered game, several giant trout and pickerel and half a dozen partridges knocked from their roosts by sticks.

The delicious odor of crisping fish, of broiling partridge, of baking bannocks, of simmering tea filled the camp space, drifting tantalizingly upon the evening breeze. With magical celerity a home-like atmosphere had been created in the midst of the wilderness, and the tiny clearing hard by the pine gloom and walled 'round with the creeping dusk took on the well-defined air of ancient use.

Lying in their shelters the whites ate their meal while they dried their steaming clothes, and once they were done with the serving the canoemen squatted by themselves, bending over the kettles and pots of the central fire, their red-bronze frames and swarthy faces touched carmine by the flamelight. Hungrily they ate and lighted their pipes, Missowa delaying long enough to bring Carlisle's own pipe to his teepee.

"Here is dry tobacco, Factor," he announced, "and the steel that makes the fire (flint and steel)."

"Put them there," directed Carlisle, "and, Missowa, have the middlemen whittle out new paddles, weaving woolen streamers for them from the ball of wool you will find in the packs. Also, see that the canoe is mended with care. We start on at dawn."

When the Ojibway had gone back to the fire to set the middlemen at their tasks, Carlisle filled and lighted his pipe, ecstatically savoring the tobacco's perfume and the other camp fragrances that stole so familiarly into his nostrils, the supper scent, the pungent wood smoke, the spice of balsam and pine, the resinous pitch the Indians were melting, the steam of human garments.

For it was ever at such moments as these that the incomparable thrill of the life in the wild rushed over him in a surge of joy so fierce as to be akin to pain. Here men lived, he exulted! Here was no cramped, purposeless existence, no desk-bound slavery such as he had come to visualize in his four years of London. This was the epic life, the Homeric essay, the Iliad of the forest!

Dreamily his eyes and his soul and his senses lapsed, and before he was aware his hand slipped limply from his pipe and the pipe fell from his lips. The night crept on. The young moon showed for a little over the balsam ridge, bathing the forest like a radiant mist, glowing through the latticed branches, checkering each clearing in silver and black, overlaying the ghostly birch trunks with luminous pearl.

THE transient light filtered through Carlisle's bough shelter, touched his face, and receded again as the moon set behind the ridge. But neither moonrise nor moonset served to waken him. Still he dozed, till the slight scuffle of a moccasin stirred him.

Yet, true to his woodsman's instinct, he stirred inwardly, not outwardly, giving no muscular response to the impression from without till he should have sensed whether friend or enemy wore the scuffling moccasins. His body retained its immobility. Only his eyelids parted, almost imperceptibly, till he could glimpse the fire-lit entrance where his mosquito smudge flared and smoked and hissed its defiance to the whining pests.

Then he saw in their dainty materialism the moccasins that had wakened him, two tiny creations of elkskin, like Cinderella slippers of the forest, so small that they could have walked upon his outstretched palms. They revealed the identity of his visitor. None but Joan wore such fairy footgear.

He shifted his furtive gaze upward, to see her swelling-hipped, full-bosomed figure silhouetted in the ochre glow. He could mark the wonderful fairness of her skin, the sparkle of the lake-blue eyes, the shimmer of her hair that gleamed like a frosted web of fine gold threads with every flare of the smudge.

"Paul, how does your wound feel now?" she asked.

Some sudden, unaccountable whim kept Carlisle silent.

Hesitatingly Joan stepped over to where he lay upon the balsam boughs. He seemed asleep, his eyelids closed. In the dim light of the interior she noted the bandage upon his stockinged leg and the discoloration of the bruise upon his temple, and a flood of mingled feeling rushed over her.

All in an instant she was swept and shaken by the romantic glamor of their first meeting that eventful night at Grande Portage, by the sweet companionship of their days of wilderness travel, by the passionate unbaring of Carlisle's heart in the wild dash through the Rapide des Boisfranc.

Standing over him, her own heart beat in a tumult, and though her intellect flashed a vague warning of restraint, it could not curb the impulsive surge of her emotion. Swiftly she stooped, pressed her warm lips to Carlisle's lips and fled back on silent winged feet to her own tent.

His fibers all a-throb, Carlisle opened his eyes. Instinctively his arms went out, but Joan had vanished too quickly. Like a wood nymph she had come and like a wood nymph she had gone, too ethereal for the human grasping.

All Carlisle's arms encircled was the empty air. All his wide-open eyes saw was the stoic Indians mending the six-fathom canoe. It lay on its side by the fire, one gunwale propped up with sticks, the yellow bark shining deep orange under the magic flames.

Over the rents Missowa and Waseyawin were fitting strips of canvas while the middlemen poured on the resinous pitch. A study in red, yellow, bronze, crimson, umber and orange they worked, ringed 'round by the velvet band of the forest starred here and there with the prying eyes of the watchers of the wild.

Carlisle followed the shift of the eyes unconsciously, and by the eyes and the scurryings among the leaves he read the identity of each—a darting weasel or mink, a timid doe with her fawn, a porcupine running a log, a pack of full-bellied harmless wolves worming like dogs toward the fascinating glare.

And in the trees above he read analogous sounds, the feathered wild things of the air going abroad with their kin of the earth, the plaintive whippoorwill, the rasping night hawk, the hooting owl on its noiseless pinions. All the wilderness had awakened with the moonset. The susurrus of the pine sang overhead like passing winds, and winds themselves, arising no one knew how, dying no one knew where, came and went like unseen hosts on the march.

Beaver slapped their pistol-like warnings in the ponds below the balsam ridge. Bull moose called from the thickets beside. Never for a moment was the night-world still. Yet, buoying all these noises, Carlisle sensed an underswell of silence, the poise of the lonely land, passive, brooding, Nirvanic, the voiceless spirit of the North itself lying mute in its ambush, waiting to spring upon men in the unguarded moment of their weakness!

The pale-yellow stars in the purple sky seemed planets appointed to another sphere, and the only gleam which showed in the dark, austere immensity of the earth itself

was the fitful sweep of the aurora above the trees on the ridge and the phosphorescent smear of organic gases waving over the black muck marsh beneath. Carlisle gazed at the pyrotechnic display till too prolonged gazing began to produce internal flashes in his brain and he dropped his head for sleep.

All the rest of the camp slumbered save Missowa and Waseyawin, who before turning in with their fellows were sitting a moment by the fire pointing with the stems of their pipes at the aurora and the will-o'-the-wisps. They were talking in hissing, gurgling, lisping Cree, and the trend of their speech was the last sound to reach Carlisle's drowsy ears.

"Behold, my Cree brother," spoke Missowa, "there are the Spirit Lights in their Summer garb, the souls of our forefathers rushing rank on rank into battle. For the dead die not, Waseyawin, but live to hunt and fish and fight again even as you and I shall do. Their robes of light and flashing spears are but signs for their children and their children's children here in the forest below."

"Ae, Missowa," nodded the Cree, "signs that we will follow when our last camp-fire is burned. But these others," indicating the dancing, incandescent will-o'-the-wisps,"we do not follow. For they, my Ojibway brother, are the lures of our enemies, of Shining Horns and his men. They think us at the bottom of the whirlpools, and these lights they have put out by magic to lead our drowned souls astray!"

CHAPTER VI

THE DEAD ARISE

THREE hundred miles of headland-broken, island-studded gale-thrashed, roller-raped Winnipeg lay behind, one hundred and more of the sinuous Saskatchewan, and at last through the long twilight of a Northern evening Cumberland House loomed up on Pine Island Lake, the western arm of the Sturgeon.

July had run out upon Lake Winnipeg where head winds held them behind sheltering points, where erratic squalls beached them upon stormy lee shores, where rain-choked gales flailed them upon barren islets, smothering any attempt at fire, leveling any attempt at shelter, roaring and ramping for five days at a stretch. It was the first week of August and the end of Carlisle's long journey from James Bay.

The end, and how familiar an end! His mind turned back to the time when he had sojourned here with Thompson long years before, planning and executing for the day of undisputed supremacy of the Hudson's Bay Company, and his blood leaped as he glimpsed the well-remembered log post buildings, the stout stockade, the tall flagstaff with the blood-red banner of his corporation flapping from its tip.

All about the stockade straggled Indian teepees of the tribes come in to trade. The smoke of many teepee fires spiraled through the dusk and a babel of noises rose from the camps, the guttural jargon of the hunters and squaws, laughter of the maidens, wails of papooses, shrieks of children at play, barking of mongrel dogs.

Suddenly these noises stilled! Men lining the stockade, standing upon the firing steps and leaning over the palisades, had caught sight of Carlisle's huge canoe. A voice commanded silence, and then with a surge a loud cheer burst from whites and Indians alike.

They recognized even in the dusk the Hudson's Bay flag in the canoe bow, the long gonfalon in the stern, the gaudy costumes, woolen streamers, slanting feathers that graced the canoemen of a Factor. Here, then, was the new overlord they expected—here was Carlisle of far Moose Factory!

The gate swung open swiftly, and a bare-headed, swarthy-skinned, heavily-built half-breed came forward. Cree blood showed in his eyes and feature casting, and by these signs as well as by the description Eugene Drummond had given of him Carlisle immediately recognized him as Henry Galt, the chief trader who had been left in charge of the post awaiting his taking it over.

Son of one of the earlier white adventurers who had married among the Crees, Drummond had said, and now as he advanced with long stalking strides he spoke a salutation in Cree.

"Welcome, Factor," he greeted respectfully, glancing the rest over with his black eyes but seeming not to see any other than his superior as he glanced. "You have had a hard journey I read."

"True, Galt, a hard one," returned Carlisle. "Through fire and flood on the rivers

and storm on the lakes. But we are here at last."

"Ae, you are here, and it is good that your flag should float."

With his own hands, Galt took the streaming gonfalon from the stern of the canoe. It was soiled with river water, ripped by snags, scorched from the breath of forest fire, but these scars on the silk but lent it greater prestige. Proudly the chief trader carried it into the stockade ground, and ordered the post banner lowered. Quickly he fastened the gonfalon on and bade the Indians haul away on the halyard.

AS HE emerged again the two banners rose to the staff tip, Company's flag and Factor's flag flying side by side. Another cheer rang from the palisade, and as Galt waved his hand the guns up-pointed and blazed in salute.

"Factor," spoke the chief trader in the oratorical manner of his mother's people, "I hand you over the post."

Carlisle drew himself up proudly upon the shore. The flesh wound in his leg had practically healed. He stood straight and strong.

"I take it from good hands, Galt," he accepted. "You I choose to retain as my chief trader. Eugene Drummond is my brigade leader, and it is news of Drummond I want to hear now. Have you seen anything of him?"

"Three days ago Drummond came, he and other Hudson's Bay men I did not know, as prisoners among the crews of Wayne the Free-Trader. I had orders not to bother anybody till you came. I knew something had gone wrong, but I obeyed my orders."

An exclamation of joy burst from Joan. She seized Carlisle's arm with a little hysterical laugh, though the tears were in her eyes.

"He is here, Paul—he is here!" she exulted. "Richelieu didn't catch him after all. But I was so fearful, even though you were so sure!"

"Yes, it's good news for you," smiled Carlisle. "I thought Richelieu could hardly match him for woodcraft. And Richelieu himself, Galt," addressing his chief trader again, "what about him?"

"Four days ago the Northwester came," answered Galt pointing where a scarce half-mile away Richelieu's post flying the Northwest flag showed vaguely in the deepening dusk. "In June he took the Sturgeon Lake brigades down to Grande Portage with furs. Now he comes with the Winter supplies."

"I know," Carlisle laughed grimly. "I met him myself at Grande Portage, also on the way into the Pays d'en Haut. And he arrived first, eh? A day ahead! You hear that, Joan? Your father gave Richelieu the slip by leaving the river as I imagined."

"Yes, yes, but take me to him at once," Joan pleaded. "You know he thinks I'm dead."

"In a moment," assented Carlisle. "Galt, order the men of the post to stand to their arms in case of trouble and you yourself go on and give the peace sign at Fort Wayne. I'll take my crew as bodyguard although I don't suppose that is hardly necessary. Ha—you, Father Andrews! Like an ungrateful boy I was almost forgetting you. Go on inside, Father, and take the freedom of Cumberland House till I come back."

"No, Paul, I'll go with you," decided the priest. "I like to be by your side in case of trouble to add my influence to your own."

"All right then, Father! Go ahead, Galt!"

Wayne's post stood as close to Cumberland House as Richelieu's. It, too, was less than half a mile away, although, close as the posts were together, it was no mystery that Carlisle had never seen Joan till he set eyes on her at Grande Portage.

It was many years since he was here with Thompson, and Wayne at that time was establishing other posts on the Saskatchewan's branches in territory far removed from Pine Island Lake. His Pine Island Lake post, only a trader's cabin in the beginning, had grown as his trade grew, and he had added to it piece by piece, warehouse, fur house, spacious dwelling-house, all of logs, till his independent post under the Free-Trade flag was as large as that of either the Hudson's Bay Company's or the Northwesters'.

Only lately had he deemed it necessary to protect it in any material sense, increasing friction with both companies compelling the erection of the palisade against which Galt now hammered.

"Who's that?" demanded the gatekeeper, peering through the gloom. "You, Galt? What d'ye want?"

But Galt, his open palm held out in the peace sign, was forestalled by the eager, excited Joan.

"Open the gate, Murdock, open the gate!"

she commanded peremptorily. "It's Joan. I want my father. These men are friends. Open quickly."

Like a man who sees the dead arise the gatekeeper obeyed, and Joan brushed rapidly past him, rushing at the head of the others, leading them through the yard toward the dwelling-house.

The rough benches upon the long veranda across the house front were empty, but the door stood open, a yellow square of lamplight eddied through and through with blue tobacco smoke, and in the frame of the doorway as in a painted picture they could see a group of men inside, Wayne, Mason and others lounging in chairs about a big table, conferring over papers, smoking long black pipes.

Joan sprang over the veranda and framed herself in the doorway.

Carlisle at her shoulder saw the faces of the men inside distorted by a colossal amazement, incredulity, and darkened by the sudden shadow of superstition which their wilderness natures could never wholly flout. He saw Mason's brown-bearded, long-jawed face tilted back, the cigar poised in his hand, his yellowed teeth jarred apart, not in triumphant grin as he had seen it once before but in speechless gape.

Wayne himself, his cigar dropping on to the table, had risen from his chair to his great height, his features as impassive as carved mahogany but his fawn-green eyes blazing like molten disks. Such a look in any living eyes Carlisle had never seen. It approached most nearly the vision of the seer, the prophet, the vision that seems to pierce the gray rime of earthly things and behold the secret realms of another world.

"Verna! Verna!" he articulated in a whisper.

"No, no, father, I am not my mother's ghost!" declared Joan, crying full-voiced, leaping full-blooded across the floor. "I am Joan, and I am not at the bottom of Rapide des Boisfranc. Oh, my dear—my dear, I'm sorry I've made you grieve!"

She was in his arms, impulsive, palpitant, moving, her wheaten hair mingled with his brown curls, her cheek pressing his like a rose petal lying upon an Autumn-browned leaf. Abruptly Wayne's grim strength went from him. He trembled like the slim poplars on the wind-blown Saskatchewan hills and sagged back into his chair, his daughter on his knee.

"By the Doom, girl—by—the—Doom!" was all he could mutter.

"See, I'm a prisoner of war, father!" she laughed gaily. "And I've come for exchange. You're to give Paul his twenty-five men in place of me. Am I not worth it? Besides, I've promised him you would."

"Paul—Paul," stammered Wayne in bewilderment, "who——"

THEN his eyes followed Joan's laughing ones to rest upon Carlisle gazing down the table length upon him. Though the Factor and the rest had entered on Joan's heels, Wayne saw him for the first time.

He had seen nothing before but the feminine vision of his dead, living again in his daughter's image, and now he leaped violently to his feet once more, pushing Joan aside into his chair as he leaped.

Carlisle saw that his eyes had their earthly focus back, bitter, implacable, savage, and in them he faced the terrible, lightning-like blaze of passion he knew so well.

"You, Carlisle," choked Wayne, "you dragged my girl by the brink of hell through those rapids and you dare to come and stand in my post afterward—you cursed spit of your drunken English father!"

"Stop right there, Wayne!" warned Carlisle, a wave of red anger surging over his own face. "For your daughter's sake I've taken a good deal of defiance from you. For her sake maybe I'll take a lot more. I can't say. But don't touch my father's honor with that reckless tongue of yours!"

"Touch his honor? I'll touch his very bones in his grave and make them writhe in shame! You saw her there in the doorway—Joan? That was Verna—her mother—all rose and golden.

"That was how I saw her last the day of Major Butler's raid on the Wyoming. The day his Rangers—the cursed lusting hounds—came by, under Captain Charles Carlisle and Carlisle—the vilest hound of them all—struck her down in my own house while I was away!"

"You lie, Wayne! You lie abominably, devilishly! None but armed men were killed in that raid."

"So the ignorant tale-makers tell, but we who went through the fire and slaughter know better. We who lost our homes and our loved ones have memories that nothing can efface!"

"Andrews, Andrews," groaned Carlisle, his face whitened to an ashy shade under his bronze, "tell him he lies! You knew my father. You were his friend, and my guardian. Tell him he lies!"

"May God forgive me, Paul, but I can't," murmured the priest, catching him by the arm. "I know nothing but what Wayne has said and that the raid was made in liquor. Liquored men are madmen and their brains do not know what their hands are doing."

"And you knew, Andrews? And you never told me? But, high heaven, he was my father, my father!"

Reiterating the words, Carlisle stood gazing wildly across the table at Joan, staring into a face as pale as his own, into eyes as wide-set with anguish.

"And you, Joan, you knew—" he began.

"Only the—the—truth, Paul," Joan cried. "My father never told me whose hand was in it."

"There was no need," snarled Wayne, "no need till now! Am I a liar, then, Carlisle? If you think so, go and ask Richelieu. I have no love for him at this late date, but he was once our friend, for he was as dashing an officer as one would find anywhere in those days.

"Simon Richelieu was a nineteen-year-old lieutenant then, officering what local force we had, and he was the one who took me home and showed me the crumpled, bleeding, breathless thing that war makes of woman! And, a few hours before, I had left her all rose and golden! By heaven, go and ask Richelieu, I tell you! He saw!"

"I—will—not," panted Carlisle in a passion of despair. "One word of Richelieu's corroboration and I would kill him!"

"By the Doom, you hold a tarnished honor brightly! It's well Charlie Carlisle fell on the Wyoming. It would have been better for yourself if you had never lived. When I drifted North from my homeless valley with my girl of four I swore an oath against the Carlisle breed, and by the grave that lies southward on Wyoming waters I will keep it! Now, go back to your post, Carlisle. Joan's word is mine. Mason will hand you over your twenty-five men."

The petrified Missourian sprang into life again, but the Factor did not move. He remained staring stupidly at Joan till the priest drew him toward the door. Missowa, Waseyawin and the four middlemen crossed the veranda ahead like gliding shadows, and like gliding shadows they mingled in the yard with Mason's muster of the astonished Hudson's Bay prisoners—Drummond, Lewis, Garry, Lea, Hampton, Jarvis, Wells, the James Bay Crees, Ojibways, Chippewas.

But of these Carlisle took no note. He walked unseeing, urged by the priest's hand across the dark yard.

"Andrews," he burst out as they passed through the gate, "did my father know the district he was raiding?"

"Yes, Paul."

"The people?"

"Yes."

"The house?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my God—her?"

"Yes. I can't lie to you. You know I can't!"

"Did my father love her?" he blurted harshly. "For heaven's sake, tell me if he loved her?"

"Yes, he loved her," declared Andrews in a broken voice. "That much I know. When your mother died in the Niagara post, Paul, his was a lonely life. He loved Verna Miller! Aye, and so did the stripling Richelieu, though Wayne won her from them both!"

Like lightning the significance of Andrews' words flashed home to Carlisle as he stumbled along the rough shore of Pine Island Lake toward Cumberland House. Before him was more than the competition of three rival trading companies, more than the essay at empire of three rival corporations.

He was plunged into the tense struggle of souls in combat, all the wrongs of another generation crying for their righting, with the very spirits of the dead arising from the grave to claim that righting.

CHAPTER VII

TRADE WAR

SITTING around the counter of Galt's trading-room at morning, the Hudson's Bay officers leaped swiftly to their feet as Carlisle came in. All the sleepless night he had shut himself up in his council-room, and now they hung upon his decision concerning the course to be pursued against Northwesters and Free-Traders alike.

"Is it war, Factor?" they chorused eagerly.

The marks of sleeplessness and inner conflict showed upon Carlisle, pallor of skin under his bronze, dark circles around his eyes, a weariness in the gray eyes themselves, but he nodded with his grim smile.

"It's war," he announced, "perhaps in all its bitter phases but a trade war first of all. It starts today, this morning, on the minute, and I've work cut out for each of you to do."

A murmur of approbation stirred the group. It was what they hungered for, action, strategy, blows, no doubt, in the end.

Carlisle took a map from his pocket and spread it open on the counter.

"Look," he urged, pointing, "get the situation fixed in your minds! Richelieu's post was the first post on Sturgeon Lake. Tom and Joe Frobisher built it in 1772, and it was built in defiance of the Hudson's Bay Company's charter.

"That it has passed, since the amalgamation of the Montreal traders as the Northwest Company, into Richelieu's hands does not alter that fact. It's trading where the Hudson's Bay Company alone has the right to trade. Sam Hearne came up the Churchill in 1774 and masked it with this post, Fort Cumberland, but competition hasn't killed it—yet.

"Then, years after, Wayne buffaloed his way in—a second poacher. Now, men, this Cumberland District is *the* district of the West. Who holds the Cumberland District holds the Saskatchewan, and who holds the Saskatchewan holds the West. You understand me?"

"*Oui*," nodded Drummond emphatically, speaking for them all, "dey understand dat all right."

"So did our sleeping overlords on James Bay when they woke up," Carlisle went on. "That's why they sent Hearne up here. That's why they hurried other men in to build other forts, a perfect network of them from Hudson's Bay to the Rockies, from Athabasca Lake to the headwaters of the Missouri.

"Those forts will hold the West only if Cumberland House holds Sturgeon Lake. Because, you see, the Saskatchewan is the great highway from the Rockies, and Sturgeon Lake commands the water lanes to it on the east, the west and the north. There's the point. It's the connection of the Northern lakes and rivers here with the Churchill River that gives this place its strategic importance."

"Losh, yes, Factor," spoke Garry, "and what wass it you would be asking us to do?"

"I'll tell you in a moment. I just want to emphasize the danger. You know the strength of the Northwesters, and I can tell you in all confidence that the Government of Canada is pitted through and through with Northwest adherents. Where they are not actually shareholders in the company, they are in close relationship with shareholders.

"The Hudson's Bay Company is powerful in the Government ranks in England, but it is the Northwest Company which wields that power here. If we lose our grip, the Hudson's Bay Company may as well surrender its charter."

"The teevil!" exclaimed Lea, astounded, while all the men, suddenly smitten by the magnitude of their undertaking, exchanged glances of wonder.

"Into the hands of the Northwesters it will go," Carlisle declared. "And, without our opposition in the field, they will not be long in swallowing up the Free-Traders."

"Yer don't mean to s'y, Factor, that the Northwesters 'll stand supreme, do ye?" burst out Jarvis, the Cockney clerk. "Blimey if the men that's fought under the H. B. C. flag so long could stand that, ye know. And, s'elp me, wot is the territory of our charter? Ayn't it all the ground drained by the rivers wot run into Hudson's B'y?"

"Yes," smiled the Factor, "but that territory is tremendously big and vague, and its boundaries have never been properly defined. I have private information that the Northwesters will soon send an expedition over the Rockies to the Pacific. The headwaters of the Saskatchewan are by no means the limits of their ambitions, and besides, the Free-Trade movement is to be feared as much as the Northwest advance.

"You know yourselves that Wayne has independent traders planted all over the West in his different posts. If both the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Companies go down in a death-grapple the Free-Traders will step in and gather all the spoils of the West. Three strong companies are reaching out for it, and I tell you in all seriousness, men, that two of those companies have to be smashed before another Summer."

"Then to the Dowl wi' the Free-Traders and the Northwesters alike!" cried Hampton belligerently. "Our own territory be given us by old charter. Us comed out here under our company's flag, an' we ban't going to see un fall, I can assure 'e. You'm counting on we, I reckon, Factor, to hold un feet while you'm breaking un heads ope."

"That's it, Hampton," laughed Carlisle. "You five men must hold my lines of communication. That's why I brought you in. Our posts in the Norway House and York Districts have complete control. That makes everything safe from Lake Winnipeg to Hudson's Bay, but between here and Lake Winnipeg you must hold the lines as I say.

"Galt and Drummond I keep by me, of course. Lea goes to the Nepowin, Lewis to the Pas, Garry to Moose Lake, Hampton to Chimawawin, Jarvis to Grand Rapids. You will keep your territory clear of interlopers, pay any price to get its trade and await further orders from me.

"The Summer ship from England will reach James Bay any day now, and the moment she arrives York boats are coming up the Hayes River from York Factory with reserve supplies of food and trade goods. You will hold these boats in relays at Grand Rapids, Chimawawin and the Pas until I send for them. That's all, men. You start at once. Galt and Drummond will pick you out small canoes, outfits and paddlers."

IN FIVE minutes the fleet was afloat. No man other than those Carlisle had addressed had been told its mission or its destination, but conjecture ran rife through Cumberland House. The whites hazarded shrewd guesses concerning the Factor's plans, while the Indian tribes herded on the shore, jabbering and pointing at the canoes till they disappeared. From the doorway of Galt's trading-room Carlisle watched them go, and he had no misgivings as he watched.

He knew his men, their abilities, limitations, merits and demerits as he knew his own, and even after they were gone he saw them still on his mental vision—Garry, the man of Inverness with his short, broad body, flaming red beard and whimsical face; Lea, the Cromarty youth with the brown handsomeness of the tall, young Highlander; Hampton, ruddy, fleshy, with his atmosphere of the freshly-turned peat soil and his Devon speech; Jarvis, a bunch of wires and nerves reeling off his Cockney slang; and Lewis, aged, mountainous-framed, gray-haired and gray-bearded, craggy-featured as the Hebrides he hailed from.

They were all picked men, tried in the Company's service. Carlisle had chosen them out of many on the Bay, and he knew they would not fail him. Wells, the South-of-England stripling he had chosen for a different kind of work, that of secret service, and him he now sent out in another direction.

His destination was the Seepanock Channel, a short water lane connecting the Saskatchewan and its tributary the Carrot where they flowed almost parallel for a space. His mission was to establish a Winter camp there and scout along it to prevent the possible attempt of down-coming brigades of rival traders to avoid Pine Island Lake and reach the Saskatchewan again far to the east of it.

As the crowd on the shore broke up with the passing of the canoes, Carlisle wheeled back to Galt's counter.

"Let me see your day-book, Galt," he requested.

He turned up the last entered page, the page of recent trade and scanned the entries with a practised eye.

Upon the yellow leaves of the well-thumbed book the entries ran thus:

Son-of-the-Stars	10 beaver	10 skins ($5.00)
Amiska	5 skunk	2 skins ($1.00)
Running Moose	1 common red fox	1 skin ($0.50)
	2 otter	8 skins ($4.00)
Makwa	1 prime red fox	6 skins ($3.00)
	1 cross do.	7 skins ($3.50)
	1 black do.	12 skins ($6.00)

The unit value was a beaver skin, chosen as something concrete that the Indian mind could comprehend in default of mathematics and currency tokens, and though the unit fluctuated in value with different posts it was worth, on the average, fifty cents. To the Indian his more valuable pelts were simply his beaver skin multiplied as many times as the post trader decreed.

In the entries Carlisle gazed upon he found few of the costlier skins, in fact few of any kind of skins, and he knew the reason. These were but the feelers, the first light skins of barter. Ever slow to bargain and anxious to obtain the greatest price for their

catch, the hunters delayed, awaiting the coming of the new Factor in the hope that they might profit more.

But the amount of that profit they had never imagined even in their rosiest dreams, for now Carlisle tapped the day-book and gave Galt the chief trader a hitherto unheard-of schedule of prices.

"Double it, Galt," he ordered. "One beaver is worth two skins. Send out the word among our Indians and see that some of our Indians mingle with Wayne's and Richelieu's to carry the news."

Immediately the word went out and trade began. The Indians swarmed into the yard and covered the trading-room floor. Tall, black-eyed, raven-haired, smoky-skinned, they stood, gaunt of waist and sinewy of limb, clad only in deerskin trousers and moccasins. Galt took a bag of trade bullets to represent the beaver skins which they comprehended.

They laid down what they had brought. Galt gave them its estimated value in trade bullets. They traded the bullets back to Galt for whatever supplies they needed. Thus in wilderness currency they turned fox, mink, beaver and other skins into flour, sugar, bacon and other commodities.

"Nor do I measure my flour and sugar with my fingers inside the cup as the Northwesters and Free-Traders do," Galt encouraged them in their own language.

"Neither do I take more of your bullets than the value says. And I write no larger debt against you in the books than the just debt."

The trade grew brisk, and not with the Hudson's Bay Company's Indians alone but with the tribes the Free-Traders and Northwesters had won to their allegiance. Cotameg the Chippewa in Carlisle's service and others visited the teepees about Wayne's and Richelieu's posts, dropping news that sent the occupants of those teepees stalking over to Cumberland House.

At Richelieu's post Cotameg detached himself from all the rest and performed another and unrehearsed act. By a circuitous route he worked 'round to the rear of the post and there, unmarked by any one on the Cumberland House side, signaled to a man on the palisades above. In a moment the gate opened, and Richelieu himself appeared.

"What is it, Cotameg?" he whispered. "Quick! It is broad daylight, you must remember, and it would not do for us to be seen. *Mon Dieu*, no!"

"He has sent men to the Nepowin, the Pas, Moose Lake, Chimawawin and Grand Rapids," the Chippewa spoke rapidly. "There is food and trade stuff coming up from James Bay. It will stay at the river posts till he sends for it. No one was to know, but I was hidden in the loft while they talked and I heard."

"*Bon!*" exclaimed Richelieu. "That is all, eh?"

"He has made two beaver the price of one beaver."

"*Ciel*, a trade war! Then come to me day by day, Cotameg. There will be things I must know. *Voilà!* Go back swiftly and secretly."

Nor was Wayne long in hearing the news from his own Indians, and that very morning he met the Hudson's Bay Company's challenge by advancing the beaver unit another skin. In the afternoon Richelieu was compelled to make it four skins, and that night Carlisle raised it to five.

THEREAFTER it was a colossal game of poker with beaver skins for chips and no limit but the topaz sky overhead. Like the Northland princes they were the three played the game with mad persistence. Never for an instant, night or day, did trade slacken, for to slacken was to lose.

Carlisle, Galt and Drummond worked in turn behind the counter while the Indians they dealt with traded and slept in relays or slept not at all. Such profit, the tribes well knew, could not last long. They availed themselves while they might.

Never had the stoic hunters been moved to such excitement. They stalked no more but ran violently from post to post, frantic for the highest bid. Around Wayne's or Richelieu's counter they would be swarming, trading greedily, when a fellow tribesman would rush in jabbering and away they would surge to Cumberland House where beaver was worth another skin. For never before had the Northland known the like, never before had the poverty-ridden Crees been possessed of so much wealth or reveled in so much luxury.

Now their costlier pelts came out, bear, lynx, wolf, wolverine, ermine, otter, marten, fisher, the prime red fox, crosses, silvers, blacks. Carlisle, Galt and Drummond

were pressed harder than ever, toiling in a sweat through the sweltering August days.

The trading-room was a-reek with the odor of fur. The teepees of the hunters were piled with debt they carried away from the store, pyramided with flour, sugar, tea, tobacco, bacon, beans. The hunters' squaws came likewise and had their lords clutter them up with soap, ribbon, calico, velvet, thimbles, mirrors, beads, silk handkerchiefs, Balmoral skirts, huckaback towels and a hundred other useless things. Gay as their squaws, these lords went about in Wincy shirts with castor-oil rubbed on their heads, gloating over the new capotes laid by for colder weather, proud of their bright axes, knives, brass-bound trade guns and ammunition.

Much of the food they wasted in gorging feasts. Much of the ammunition they foolishly fired at marks. But, in Indian logic, what did it matter? By the end of the first mad week Carlisle, supreme in the field, had hammered the price of beaver to thirty skins.

Also by the end of that mad week Cumberland House was stripped of every article of trade goods, every pound of provisions. So, too, were the other posts, and the Factor congratulated himself and his men. He had won his game. It was what he aimed at. Too late Wayne had awakened to the cost of playing Northern poker.

The fort was out of farinaceous food, and he was forced to send messengers off into the forest for others of his independent posts to come to his aid with enough supplies to tide him over the Winter. Richelieu, however, sent no messengers forth. He looked at the empty shelves of his post, shrugged his shoulders and awaited Carlisle's next move.

It was Saturday night and the Factor, Galt and Drummond with the volunteer help of Andrews balanced up the company's books. Besides forcing the hands of their competitors in the matter of supplies, they had cornered the bulk of the furs. Galt's fur-room was crammed with pelts.

It was true that they had paid five times too much for some of the beaver and other cheaper pelts, but they would make up that loss on the priceless skins like the black and silver foxes which all traders undervalued for the Indians. More than that, they had secured the trade, and the trade, in the Indian mind, was the psychological thing.

"But are you sure, Galt," asked Carlisle when they finished, "that all our Indians are in? None who got debt are missing off the books?"

"Only old White Loon, his two sons, nephew and cousin," answered Galt. "They all lived in one family, and they're all just nicely over the smallpox. I got word of their coming in and stopped them up the shore by Carcajou Cove. They went into camp there. I made them throw away their furs but gave them value for them.

"I dumped new clothes, outfits, supplies, and everything for them on the shore and told them to strip and leave the old camp naked. They walked out bare as babes new-born and took the fresh stuff, and then I sent them back on their trap lines."

"That's good—you did right, Galt," commended Carlisle. "We want no infection here. And there are no others?"

"No."

"Then we'll close up and have a night's sleep."

"Ba gar, yes," yawned Drummond. "I'm dozin' in ma stride, me—snorin' ovaire de beaver packs everyw'ere. *Bon soir, messieurs.*"

He lurched off, staggering for sleep, and the others rose and followed.

"I'm glad you finished up before Sunday, Paul," observed Andrews, as they passed up-stairs in the Factor's house.

"Oh, yes, Father! As you know, most of the Factors go on just the same with their trading or routing of the brigades, but I believe in resting as far as possible one day in seven. See you in the morning, Andrews, and hope I'll be up in time for your service!"

SUNDAY morning broke in a white lake fog, dank and woolly, but when Carlisle stepped out of his house he saw the sun sluicing away the fog with a flood of gold. He beheld the ordered march of the rollers, white wave-crest behind white wave-crest as far as the eye could reach, running beneath the fog drift, and the tops of the pine-clad islands lifting starkly above.

Andrews was already on the shore, taking his stand upon a huge rock that rose up like a giant altar, and whites and Indians from all three posts were blackening the beach, the bronzed, roughly-clothed woodsmen, the smoky savages, the squaws decked in all their finery with new velvet moss-bags for their wailing papooses.

On this day of truce in their trade war the

rival companies met on a common ground of worship, some out of genuine desire, others out of curiosity, more out of sheer idleness.

Richelieu himself arrived with his black beard newly trimmed and his resplendent uniform cleaned and polished. Despite the peaceful appearance of things he had a bodyguard along, and he chose his place on the other side of the throng from Carlisle, giving him, with exaggerated courtesy, his ramrod bow from the hips while the sardonic laugh of the devil lurked in his black beard.

For Wayne or Joan Carlisle looked in vain, and a disconcerting qualm disturbed him inwardly. All the busy week he had had no glimpse of her, and today he had hoped—but yonder! Was the flash of a woman's dress flitting over from Fort Wayne? He stared, and his heart leaped. It was Joan and she was coming alone. Gone were her trail garments, the gray wool canoe skirt and the mosquito veil.

She walked bareheaded, a jewel at her throat, clad in a clinging silk dress of champagne color with new, snow-white doeskin half moccasins peeping from underneath. A moment he drank in the vision of her, all unflawed fairness in the full blaze of the sun, all rose and golden as Wayne had said of her mother, before she sat down upon a boulder on the outskirts of the crowd.

With prayer and oration in Cree the brief service went on, Andrews towering in his black cassock upon the rock altar above his motley congregation, his strong voice sounding sonorously from the water-line to the rim of the large gathering. To the cadences of the waves breaking upon the beach and the breezes playing through the pines they sang their hymns, chanting in many languages, crying to their divers gods.

Then with a benediction Andrews dismissed them, and the adherents of each post began to gravitate slowly toward their own precincts.

Carlisle, watching, saw that Joan did not go back directly. As if loath to leave the fresh sweetness of the morning, she slipped from the crowd and loitered up one of the forest aisles between Cumberland House and Fort Wayne. For a moment he hesitated, made as if to follow Andrews inside the stockade and then turned off up the ferny avenue Joan had taken.

A little farther on he caught sight of her wandering amid the jumble of rock ridges and grassy hills that fringed the woodland. All the hollows were splashed with the hue of berries, red raspberries, golden gooseberries, blueberries, the profligate wild black currants. All the hills were ablaze with flowers, waves of bluebells, tangles of wild pink roses, patches of vivid lilies, a largess of yellow daisies running riot everywhere.

Joan was idling along, bending here and there with the supple ease of the wilderness trained, gathering what pleased her fancy, but at the sound of Carlisle's feet in the briers she whirled swiftly, poised at her full height in the fashion she had inherited from her father.

In a flash Carlisle sensed the change in her! She was the same yet not the same woman as before her father's revelation the night of their arrival on Sturgeon Lake.

That revelation seemed to have thrown her back on herself, stamped her more definitely as a Wayne. In the very accentuation of her father's mannerism Carlisle read a strengthening of her loyalty to that father, and deep loyalty to Wayne could mean nothing but deep antagonism to him.

With something of the same feeling he had experienced when he feared she was going to be absent from the congregation of the Pine Island Lake shore, he stopped before her without a greeting, searching her face with his eyes.

"Paul, Paul," she cried peremptorily, first to break silence, "who gave you leave to follow me here?"

"Nobody, but I took it," he answered boldly. "I took it, as men must always take the things they want in this Northland."

"But you had no right!"

"Ah, but I have the right! A wood nymph came to me one night on the Winnipeg River and gave me that right. Do you remember?"

"No, I don't remember."

"Joan, you mean you don't choose to remember."

"Well, then—I don't choose to remember!"

FACE to face with him she stood, defiant, imperious, her arms full of the gathered wild flowers but shaming the flowers in all their fairness, far sweeter to Carlisle than the honeyed blossoms, far more haunting than the languorous perfume they breathed.

"But you must, Joan!" he cried almost

fiercely. "You don't hate me. In spite of all, you don't hate me."

"There you're wrong," she flashed. "I do hate you. I hate you with my father's hatred of your father, with his eternal loathing of a Carlisle."

He leaned over till his eyes were close to hers, till he could catch every flicker of expression, every shade of emotion.

"With his hatred," he admitted triumphantly, "but not with your own! Great heavens, Joan, I showed my feeling in the Rapide des Boisfranc, and you showed me yours in the teepee in the forest when you thought I was asleep. No — no—don't say you didn't. You can't deceive me. I won't take a thousand denials. You're acting—acting a lie for your father's sake. By the God of the Northmen, girl, you care!"

"No! no! no, I don't!"

He laid his palms on the arms that hugged the bunch of tangled flowers.

"You care!" he repeated chokingly.

"No, Paul, I——"

The rest was lost in the swift sliding of his palms to her shoulders and the swifter crushing of herself against his great frame.

"Stop, Paul, stop!" she implored, her face like a wild flower all sprayed with crimson among the crushed roses. "The blood of my mother stands between. And my father forbade me even to meet you on the trail. Let me go. If any of his men should come by and see!"

"They'd see the truth, for you're living a lie, he passionately persisted. "Tell me it's a lie!"

His caress was the elemental, soul-shaking caress that had swayed her in the caldron of the rapids, and with a little cry, Joan involuntarily tightened one arm upon his shoulders.

"Yes, I lie—I do," she panted. "And I shall go on lying—for my father's sake, for my dead mother's sake. I shall hate you day by day. Let me go! Here, take the flowers, the bluebells for my eyes, the daisies for my hair, as my father says.

"They're all you'll ever have of me. Take them. And, oh, Paul, no matter how I hate you, how I hurt you, remember that I lie! There! There! My God, what have I said—and done?"

She had forced the crushed flowers into his arms and, writhing free, darted through the saskatoon bushes into the fringe of trees that straggled 'round to Fort Wayne.

A radiant light on his features, Carlisle looked down at the crushed, tangled armful of flowers she had left him. His vision was blurred, and he seemed to see them as her palpitant self, her longings crushed like the bruised petals upon her vow of parental devotion. He held the blooms tight as he moved away along the grassy hills, through the hollows and over the brake of fern to Cumberland House, and continually his eyes strayed to his fragrant burden.

Lounging in the gateway of the stockade Galt and Drummond saw him coming and stared their surprise.

"Ba gar, w'at's dat he be got, Henry?" demanded the brigade leader.

"Flowers of the hills," replied the keen-eyed half-breed.

"*Certainement*, dat's right! Ha! Factor, you be peeck de bouquet for de post dis mornin', eh?"

Carlisle looked up, startled.

"Oh— ah— yes, Eugene!" he returned. "The hills are covered with them. Did you ever see such shades? But they wilt quickly. And say, now that I think of it, is Cotameg about?"

"De Chippewa canoeman? I'm t'ink he be gone on de *lac*. *Oui*, I'm remembaire heem say he be goin' after w'itefish."

"Well, when he comes in, send him to me. I have a journey for him this afternoon."

"*Oui*," assured Drummond, "soon's I be set eyes on hees canoe!"

The Factor passed on through the gate and up to his house, and the moment his back disappeared Eugene grasped the half-breed chief trader by the arm.

"You be see it, Galt?" he chuckled.

"No," confessed Galt whose sight had failed him for once, "see what?"

"He peeck dem, eh?" Eugene laughed enigmatically. "For sure he peeck dem. An' you ain't see it? Ba gar, wound 'round de stems—forgotten? Wan dainty handkerchief, silk, all ovaire dat stinky smell—w'at you call it?—*oui*, perfume! *Diable*, Galt, an' dat's strange flowaire for grow on de wild rose bush!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRICE OF A KISS

AT THE moment Eugene Drummond was speaking of Cotameg as having gone on the lake, the Chippewa's canoe was turning into Carcajou Cove up the Pine

Island Lake shore not a great distance from Richelieu's post. As Cotameg softly beached his craft over the rough shingle, the Northwest leader stepped out of the tree with a companion, a slim, smooth-cheeked Frenchman with a pointed mustache and a large hawk nose.

"He is here, Dentaire," observed Richelieu with satisfaction. "*Par Dieu*, never failing, never late—a spy of spies! *Comment?*"

"Yes, but what are you thinking of?" asked Dentaire.

"Wait and see what I am thinking of, Dentaire," laughed Richelieu. "Ha! Cotameg, what fable did you give this morning?"

"I am seeking whitefish," replied Cotameg without the trace of a grin, "and it will not do for me to be too long away. Also, I must not go back without some fish."

"All right, Cotameg, go on through the woods to the post. Robouix will give you money for your work, also rum since it is a slack day and nothing to do."

With alacrity the Chippewa spy sped off through the trees, and the instant he was gone Richelieu seized upon the limp dunnage sack in the canoe, the sack which contained his meager gear.

"Now, Dentaire, you will see what use I make of this *très vite*," he announced.

He shook the contents of the dunnage sack out into the underbrush and with the empty bag over his arm led the way a little distance 'round the curve of the cove and through the woods. Three hundred yards in, the deserted camp of White Loon, the smallpox-ridden Indian, and his relatives opened out before them, and Dentaire suddenly realized where he was being led.

"*Bon Dieu!*" he ejaculated and crossed himself in the trail.

"*Diablement*, Dentaire," ridiculed Richelieu, "are you afraid of an old teepee?"

"*Bon Dieu!*" repeated Dentaire, shivering, "teepees which chill one's heart!"

"Bah!" shrugged Richelieu. "They don't chill my heart."

He walked fearlessly through the ashes of the camp-fire, kicking aside discarded cooking utensils and other paraphernalia, and peered into the opening of the torn skins that covered the teepee poles.

His examination seemed to satisfy him, for, hanging the sack open-mouthed upon one of the poles, he picked up a long stick and began to fork into it things from the dark interior, worn moccasins, soiled trousers of buckskin, the dirty *parflêches* or bedrolls, while Dentaire, staring at him with horrified eyes, trembled and crossed himself and called incessantly on Providence.

"*Mort Rouge*, the Red Death, the Indians call it," grinned Richelieu as he pulled the bag down by the drawstrings in its mouth, jerked the strings tight and started to drag it behind him. "But never fear, Dentaire. This is not for you, though Providence would no doubt defend you from the plague with all that beseeching. It is for the men of the Hudson's Bay."

"And, *bon Dieu*, does Cotameg know?" quavered Dentaire, taking frantic care to keep ahead all the way back to the cove.

"No, you fool! Cotameg knows nothing about it. If he did he would be like you. *Ciel*, he would run or drop the bag in the lake. Since he knows nothing he will go back and throw the bag down as usual in Cumberland House—like I do now!"

With a tug and swing on the drawstrings Richelieu tossed the dunnage sack carelessly into the canoe bow.

"With never a touch of my hands!" he boasted. "But calm yourself, Dentaire, and quit your crossing. I think I hear Cotameg coming back. See that you give no suspicion to him."

Shortly the Chippewa appeared, walking more noisily, with less of his stony stoicism what of the rum with which Robouix under Richelieu's instructions had plied him. He had half a dozen whitefish in his hands, and, grinning, he held them out.

"Robouix's men caught many today," he explained. "And I have wasted time. These will save me time."

"Yes," Richelieu nodded, "take them quickly. They will not starve today at Cumberland House. And when the Factor sends for his supplies, do not fail to give me word or sign."

Cotameg threw the whitefish into the stern of his canoe, paddled out of Carcajou Cove and swung back to Cumberland House. He had been absent the greater part of the morning. Several times Carlisle had asked Drummond if he had returned, and now as his craft came in sight, the brigade leader went up to the Factor's house.

"De Chippewa be comin'," he informed.

"All right, Eugene. Bring me Smoking Pine to the beach. I am sending the two of

them to the Pas for food stuffs. I don't like the post to be too long on a straight meat diet. It breeds disease."

WHEN Eugene found Smoking Pine, Carlisle followed them down to the shore where the Chippewa was edging in his canoe.

"You needn't trouble to land, Cotameg," the Factor told him. "Your being away has made your start late. Step in, Smoking Pine. No—keep the fish. They'll make your first meal, for you'll have to feed yourselves on the way. Go to the Pas. Tell Lewis to send on the York boats from his post. If the boats aren't there, wait for them, and see that there is no delay on the river."

Though the rum was in his veins, Cotameg had wisdom enough to show no concern. He grunted comprehendingly and dipped his paddle in time with Smoking Pine's as the canoe glided off, but a mile or two upon his way he stopped for the noon meal just near one of the secret rendezvous that he and Richelieu had picked upon to obviate the risk of his visiting the Northwest post too often.

There they roasted some of the fish on sticks, and there Cotameg lagged behind Smoking Pine a moment before he stalked down to the canoe to reembark.

With his knife he blazed a white space upon a tree trunk in the secret rendezvous and with a piece of charcoal from the fire smudged on it the sign for Richelieu—a crude drawing of a full flour sack labeled H. B. C.

Nor was the departure of Cotameg and Smoking Pine the only departure from Cumberland House that day. After the mid-day meal, seemingly without forethought, without any definite plan, the Indian hunters took down the medicine bags from the rear of their teepees and the squaws struck the tents.

The tribes 'round Richelieu's post and Fort Wayne perceived the exodus and followed suit. The littered camp-grounds became a chaos and a bedlam of bucks, squaws, children and dogs, but finally the ruck was straightened out, the baggage bundled and apportioned, the papooses and curs sorted, and the pilgrimage began.

Their destinations were many, the up-Saskatchewan country, the down-Saskatchewan, the Sturgeon River, the Carrot River, the eastern and western arms of Sturgeon Lake, Lakes Namew, Amisk, Goose, Athapuscow!

Some went afoot on the forest trails, their worldly goods piled upon their shoulders and their dogs back-packed with forty pounds apiece. Others traveled by canoe, the glistening yellow craft loaded to the gunwales with heterogeneous dunnage and the dogs thrust under the thwarts.

The serried hosts of the forest trees swallowed the files of marchers more quickly than the sweeping phalanxes of the crested waves could hide the fleets. From the doorway of his house Carlisle watched the familiar sight. They were going back, these children of the wilderness, to their wilderness crafts, to their fish channels, caribou runs and trap lines.

They would travel from fifty to one hundred miles from Cumberland House, planting their marten deadfalls, their double-spring fox traps, their twitch-up snares for rabbits through a waste of frost and snow and he would see none of them again till Christmas.

With a strange sense of loneliness he held them to the last with his keen eyes, till the straight backs of the hunters, the bright shawls of the squaws, the warm yellow of the birch canoes faded beyond the heaving silver rollers.

A fortnight passed after their departure, and there was no sign of the York boats at Cumberland House. The month of September came in, and still Carlisle felt no uneasiness. For Cotameg and Smoking Pine had to go down 'round the Great Bend of the Saskatchewan, beyond the mouth of the Carrot to the Pasquia River where the post of the Pas lay in the crotch the Pasquia formed with the Saskatchewan.

Perhaps the supplies had not reached Lewis when they got there! Perhaps on account of pack ice or shifting shoals in James Bay the company's ship had not been able to get in on schedule, and there might have been delay in sending the York boats up from York Factory.

So the Factor waited philosophically, living like the rest of the men of the post, and the rival posts as well, upon a straight meat diet varied a little by berries from the hills. Daily they plied the rifle and the net, bringing in the first fall ducks, ptarmigan whose brown Summer feathering was whitening for Winter, finny prizes from the cool

deep waters, whitefish, inconnu, silvery trout as big as salmon, sometimes a weighty sturgeon.

Surplus fish, especially the whitefish, were dried for Winter dog feed, and when the nets yielded nothing the canoes went out at night with spearmen in the bows, bronze statues posing under the red flares in the iron baskets above them, darting their steel into the pitchy, flame-carmined water where the startled fish fluked in phosphorescent streaks.

Bird life, too, was flocking for the Fall migration. Plover, snipe, terns, long-billed marsh wrens, yellow-headed blackbirds, red-winged blackbirds, Sora rails filled the reedy labyrinths. Wood duck, ruddy duck, grebes, loons, coots, mallards, black duck covered the weedy channels, while day by day the rafts of gadwall, pintail, teal, scaups, scoters, redheads, canvasbacks grew greater and greater.

Then down drove the wedges of wild geese, true harbingers of coming Winter, the Canadas from Hudson's Bay, the wavies from unknown islands of the Arctic. Every day from sunrise to sunset the guns of the Indian goose hunters talked on the lonely shores, and by the hundreds they brought them in, to be eaten fresh or salted down in barrels, for Winter use.

But white men quickly sicken of flesh alone and white women more quickly than men, and often Carlisle wondered how Joan was faring on the savage diet. He had not seen her since the Sunday morning she had fled from him. Her flowers were withered and dead, but he looked in vain for another meeting. All the week days there was practically no communication between the posts and on Sundays she never came any more to Andrews' mixed services on the lake shore.

He wondered if she were ill, and censured himself for pressing the trade war so bitterly. Would Wayne perhaps save some staple provisions for such an emergency? But on second thought he knew Wayne was not the man to hedge in a fight. She would be living on the post diet, and he feared it did not agree.

The idea harassed him continually, set him searching at nights for overlooked food among the shelves of his quarters till one night he came across his gear bag, thrown aside and forgotten since he had established himself at the post.

In its bottom his groping fingers felt a bundle which he did not recognize at first but as he unrolled the oilcloth in which it was wrapped he suddenly remembered about it. It was a small reserve of provisions, stowed away there when he left Moose Factory in case of accident or emergency on the trip to Cumberland House.

Eagerly he spread out its contents and eyed the articles with satisfaction—a tiny bag of flour, the same of meal, a tin of salted butter, a package of raisins, a little powdered chocolate. Delicacies for anyone in the North, a boon to Joan whether she was sick or not! And who was to see him if he tossed them by night over the palisades of Fort Wayne?

HASTILY he wrapped them up again in strong paper, wrote Joan's name on the wrapper, slipped out of his house and through the stockade gate.

The moment he left the stockade he caught it—the first tang of real Autumn, that indefinable feel in the air, something of coolness, something of dampness, a savor of falling leaves, white frost fogs, mournful winds and a world left desolate by fleeting migrant wings. The moon was nearly full, ghost-like, gibbous, pouring its radiance over the blackly silhouetted tree-tops upon Pine Island Lake beneath.

A flux of molten silver Carlisle beheld the waters, broken only by the swimming muskrats at the apices of their V-shaped ripples along the shores and by the huge rafts of ducks, huddled black as islands, quacking sleepily in mid-lake. Shore and open forest aisles were bright as day, so the Factor edged into the trees and kept the shadows as he worked 'round to Fort Wayne.

Velvet-footed on his moccasins he approached the palisades, maintaining a sharp watch for riflemen who might fire first and challenge afterward, measuring his distance till he thought he was near enough to throw. As he swung back his arm, the creak of the opening stockade gate froze him in his tracks, and the next instant a woman's figure came flying 'round the palisades on the trail that led to the water's edge, almost colliding with him before she could come to a stop.

"Joan!"

"Paul!"

"Where on earth were you going, girl, at this time of night?"

"Hush, Paul!" she whispered. "Murdock, the gate-keeper or some of the others

may hear you. What on earth are you doing yourself, here, under our palisades?"

"Tell me where you were going, first," he insisted.

"I was going to the lake. I—I have not been feeling too well lately!"

"Ha, I knew it! It's the meat diet. I found some other food in my packs and was going to toss it over for you. Here it is."

He thrust the package into her hands, his eyes full of tender solicitude as they studied her face in the moonlight, a face not so full of its laughing curves, not so rose-fresh in color as it should be.

"You've been sick, sicker than you've admitted," he diagnosed.

"I've been worrying—that's the main trouble," she told him. "I'm all upset. It's about my father, Paul, his supplies. He got word back from the independent posts, and none of them can spare anything. They've had their trade wars too."

"Of course!" Carlisle exclaimed. "You didn't suppose mine was an isolated attempt did you? The Hudson's Bay Company's making a timed and concerted effort all over the West to smash competition with one stroke, and the key point of the whole campaign lies right here. That's why it pinches hardest. If I fail, everything fails.

"By heaven, Joan, do you think I carry my responsibility lightly? Do you think it's easy for me to starve you, to make you suffer? But, girl, you won't force me to that cruelty, will you? Tell me, if things come to the worst, that you'll persuade your father to give in."

"Never, Paul, never!" she refused passionately. "Before you break his independence, you'll have to break him—and me!"

"Ha, you mad girl! Then if you will face hunger, you'll have to let me send you stuff like that in your hands."

"Perhaps, Paul—that is, if you have it to send," she smiled enigmatically.

"What does that mean? Is it a riddle? Do you promise?"

"I'll give you my promise if you give me yours."

"But there's no necessity for me to promise. Are you laughing at me, warning me, or——"

He stopped in mid-sentence, twisting his head swiftly at the roar of a wild commotion at Cumberland House. He caught the thud of moccasined feet running and the shrill tenor voice of Eugene Drummond pitched on the night:

"Factor, Factor!" he was yelling. "*Mon Dieu*, w'ere you be disappear an' gone den? De York boats be on de shore an' dere's *diable* trouble makin'. Fur men fightin' de crews an' Smoking Pine be run for help! Factor—Factor!"

"Here, Eugene!" roared Carlisle, forgetful of Murdock or anybody else. "I'm coming!"

As he whirled about he found Joan blocking the trail, the moonlight glinting on a pistol in her hand.

"Stay right where you are, Paul," she commanded.

"Joan—your father's men!" Carlisle exclaimed intuitively.

He leaped suddenly, making a swift pass with his hand to grasp her arm, but, agile as a fawn, she sprang back and evaded him.

"Paul, I'll shoot," she threatened. "As sure as I hold it, I'll shoot!"

The pistol muzzle covered him fairly, daunting, deadly. For a minute or so Carlisle hesitated, searching her eyes for any sign of uncertainty, of yielding, but he read only determination there. A will that matched his own she showed, and its antagonism fired him with a sterner resolve. With a lightning movement he launched himself bodily upon her, pistol and all. He had her grasped by the shoulders, but the weapon touched his breast.

"Paul," she cried breathlessly, "don't make me——"

Then in the crucial moment her will failed. With a little cry of despair she thrust the weapon back into her pocket and swept her arms about his neck.

"I couldn't," she burst out. "I couldn't."

Carlisle's strong frame trembled from head to foot. For mad moments he knew nothing there in the trail, saw nothing but the spun-gold hair, the amethyst eyes and the passionate face touched to his under the moonlight—till through the cloying sweetness of his oblivion rang the raucous clamor of men fighting on the shore. Her arms still clinging, he tore himself free and dashed back toward Cumberland House.

AS HE reached the stockade gate out shot Eugene Drummond, his raven hair disheveled and streaming, his volatile face ridged in consternation and his black eyes glinting fire in his excitement.

"Name of *le diable!*" he shouted. "I'm be hunt you everyw'ere, Factor. Smokin' Pine——"

"I know," blurted Carlisle guiltily. "I heard you. Come on. Have you routed out the men?"

"*Mon Dieu, oui!*" exploded Eugene, catching him by the arm. "Some in deir shirts half-naked, some snorin' in peeg sleep. An dose York boats' crews fightin' off t'ree taims deir number!"

The rest of his frenzied declamation was lost upon Carlisle, who, tearing his arm free and distancing Eugene, was bounding down to the lake edge in great, long strides. Already he could see the York boats, three in number, sweeping-lined, long-prowed, eight-oared crafts, so huge as to be capable of holding one hundred bags of flour.

They lay black as logs along the shore, and over them, poised on the gunwales, running along the seats, trampling the cargoes, raged and surged a mob of fighting men. Even at that distance the Factor recognized the attackers as Free-Traders, Wayne's men of the Missouri, men of the Mississippi, men of the Red, all mingled with his Cree and Chippewayan Indians.

He saw the brown-bearded, long-jawed Mason, war-whooping his way through his opponents, and in the center of the mêlée he caught a glimpse of Wayne, towering to his great height, his copper-colored mustache flashing golden in the moonlight as he wrenched and struck.

The York boats' crews fought back with the oars and the long poles they had used for poling up the rapids, but Wayne's force was too large for their meager numbers. Before Carlisle could reach the waterline the Free-Traders had swarmed over the York boats from stern to prow, pulled, dragged, knocked the crews overside into the shallow water and seized the oars.

Then under the Factor's astounded eyes another force struck the victors like a thunderbolt. All in a second the shore thickets gushed men, the very rocks of the earth seemed to spew them. One moment they were not, the next moment they were, as if borne up on the oscillations of an earthquake or the breath of a tornado, Northwesters all, outnumbering Wayne's force as Wayne's had outnumbered the York boats' crews.

In hiding from the first, their rush, timed to the fraction of a second, caught the Free-Traders in the moment of disadvantage, just in the act of replacing the oars in the locks. Carlisle could see that the Northwesters had a stout cable in their hands, stretched taut as a rod, a score of men on either end. With a surge and splash they hurled themselves through the shallows, and like a giant scythe the taut cable cleared the York boats at one stroke, sweeping the Free-Traders overside like manikins from their perch.

In a flash the cable was lashed onto the leading boat, the other boats lashed onto the first, and already the flotilla was being towed rapidly toward Richelieu's post. As well as being equipped with a land-gate, the Northwest fort boasted a water-gate, part of the stockade extending out over the water, enclosing a little harbor entered through a heavy log barrier that was raised by ropes on capstan-like drums inside.

Carlisle saw that the water-gate stood open and that it was Richelieu's plan to slide the York boats, cargoes and all, inside his palisades. He marked the Northwest leader at the head of the trackers, pulling, exhorting, cursing the clumsy.

"Name of a name, is it a hearse, then? And *par Dieu*, do not fall over your own feet. Quick! Quick! Straight ahead, and the sooner the better!"

With an imprecation Carlisle took a running leap from the shore, Drummond, Galt, Smoking Pine and the straggle of Cumberland House men launching after, backed up by the dripping York boats' crews. He landed with a geyser-like splash among the knot of trackers, grappling with the cursing Richelieu, his feet slipping upon the shelving rock. Together they went down in the shallows, rolling and wrenching. Half a dozen men fell on top of them. The boats, never stopping in their career, bumped them aside, and in the scramble Carlisle's grip was torn from Richelieu.

He found his footing again and staggered up, but as he emerged from the water a flying oar blade caught him on the side of the head, knocking him, half-stunned, across the gunwale of one of the boats. In a daze he felt himself dragged along, half in, half out of the water. All about him surged shouting, snarling tangles of men, black as demons against the silver moonlight, his own adherents striking and tearing at the towers on the ropes, hacking at the lashing themselves, while the Northwesters fended them off.

Occasionally a rifle spat out, but at too close quarters for indiscriminate shooting, in a maze where they hardly discerned friend

from enemy, the Hudson's Bay men smote with clubbed rifles, pieces of broken oars, rocks, knives, axes. Yet despite the weight of their attack the York boats were sliding foot by foot toward Richelieu's water-gate.

Within a few hundred feet of it Carlisle pulled himself up once more with a resurge of strength and cast himself into the fray. Knocking men right and left, he seized the last boat by the stern and with all the mighty power of his body swung it sidewise toward the shore.

"Eugene! Galt!" he importuned. "Any of you there—hold the bows!"

His idea was to turn the flotilla broadside on so that it could not enter the water-gate and thus delay it till more reinforcements could arrive from Cumberland House. Without a doubt the maneuver would have been successful had it not been for the length of the Northwesters' cable.

The loose end of it had been seized by men in the water-gate and whipped 'round one of the capstan-like drums inside. Others threw themselves on the bars, and with a wrench and run the flotilla was torn bodily from the hands of Carlisle and his companions and snaked through the water-gate.

THE heavy log barrier dropped with a rumble and splash, and a loud cheer burst from the victorious Northwesters within. Still cheering, they ran to the palisades, and the hail of their bullets began to splat-splat in the shallows uncomfortably close to Carlisle and the rest.

It was madness to crouch there in the moonlight, black targets for guns behind log walls. The Hudson's Bay men paused only long enough to hurriedly shoulder their wounded and disabled and broke into a run for Cumberland House.

As Carlisle lurched along in the rear he could discern the baffled Free-Traders off toward Fort Wayne, making for their own stockade. By his great height he marked Wayne among them and close beside Wayne the shimmer of Joan's dress. Well, he read her riddle now. But her need was not yet satisfied. Richelieu had won!

In the trading-room of Cumberland House the panting Hudson's Bay men let down their burdens under the candlelight, the lifeless Chippewa, Cotameg, shot fairly through the head, two wounded white men of the post with bullets through their thighs, three men of the York boats' crews with splintered bones in their arms or legs.

Hardly a man was there but showed the marks of the battle, cracked heads, smashed knuckles, flesh wounds and bruises without end, and as they felt each other over to make sure there was no more serious hurt, Father Andrews appeared in the doorway.

Roused from sleep by the commotion, his cassock only half-belted on by its cord, he came, and at his entrance Eugene Drummond, wiping the blood from his swarthy face, dropped his handkerchief with an amazed exclamation.

"Ba gar," he whispered hoarsely, "hees face—hees face for sure!"

Andrews in his hurry had forgotten his mosquito veil, and for the first time in twenty-one years Drummond saw his features. Yet he saw them only for an instant and then only in the semi-obscurity of the doorway. Eugene's exclamation struck the priest like a warning word.

His hand went up and drew close the cowl of his cassock before he stepped from the threshold into the fuller light of the candles. Though the veil was not there, the shadow of the cowl lay dark across his features. Drummond could read them no longer.

"In the name of Heaven, what's been going on, Paul?" demanded Andrews. "What have you done?"

"Done?" echoed Carlisle grimly. "Brought you a corpse and some patients, Father. You'll have to bury Cotameg and look after the others well while I'm away."

"Away?" echoed the priest in his turn. "What do you mean?"

He took a step after Carlisle as the latter, unanswering, passed out through the trading-room doorway.

"Are you leaving Cumberland House, then, Paul?" he asked.

"Yes," Carlisle told him, "I'm going down river for the rest of my York boats."

"Oh! The ones from the Pas came on, eh? That was the cause of the fighting?"

"Yes, they came, three of them, Andrews, and—I sold them for a kiss!"

CHAPTER IX

MUTINY

LEWIS, his craggy face puckered in bewilderment, stared long at the canoe gliding in to his post of the Pas. It was the Factor's craft, all right. He could recog-

nize Waseyawin and Missowa, bowsman and steersman, and the four middlemen as well, and there was Carlisle himself amidships with Eugene Drummond by his side. Yet why were they here? It was not in accordance with the outlined plans or the issued orders. Something had happened. Something had gone wrong. Lewis tugged at his gray beard and muttered a wondering monologue till the Factor was close enough to hail him.

"Well, Lewis, how is it with everything here at the Pas?"

"Nae mon wull bother me, ye ken, Factor," replied Lewis. "I ha' done well wi' the trade, an' I maun no be complainin'. An' yersel'? Wha' aboot the York boats. Had they ony trouble gettin' up?"

"No, but lots of trouble when they got there. Richelieu has them now, cargoes and all, and I'm bound down for the others."

"The de'il! An' ye are sayin' so, Factor? But wull ye no be stoppin' a bit?"

"No—no time," refused Carlisle, sheering off again. "I just wanted to let you know. Keep a tight hand, Lewis. I'll see you again on the way back!"

On down the river the huge canoe leaped, flinging its miles behind, winding 'round its interminable curves to Chimawawin lying where the Saskatchewan broadened into Cedar Lake, but Hampton had no boats there.

"Us hasn't larned aught about them from Jarvis, Factor," was his report to Carlisle. "Not likely they comed across the lake yet or it's a very mistaker judgment I has."

So they were off again down Cedar Lake through the Narrows, past the Demie Charge Rapids, past the Roche Rouge Rapids to the Grand Rapids post. Here the Saskatchewan, watering a vast empire in its long journey from the Rockies, poured at last into Lake Winnipeg, and here Jarvis had the same report as Hampton. Only three York boats had crossed the lake, the three that had gone on to the Pas.

Jarvis couldn't tell the cause of the delay. They might be still on the river, or they might be moored at Norway House waiting for favorable weather to cross. Jarvis did not know. He would not know till they arrived.

"But strike me blind in the blinkers if they ayn't put Heskimos or some other God-fors'yken copper-skins on for crews!" he prophesied. "'Cos w'y should it tyke them this long to reach 'ere? Cawn't come fine and dry! Have to wait for the dirty rain and blows. We 'aven't but three seasons 'ere anyw'y, Factor—July, Haugust and Winter!"

Carlisle would have continued on across the lake to Norway House, but the October rains and gales were on and the Winnipeg was too dangerous at the moment for canoe travel. Perforce he fretted away the days at Grand Rapids, ever watching for the lift of the York boats through the squalls. The breath of Winter blew frostily down the vast inland sea.

All the forest was a dying blaze of color, cardinal-leaved moose maples, yellow birches, canary willows, umber cottonwoods, silvered poplars, burning brightly against the sere grasses of the gulches and the purple-black spruce of the hills. Then a weird storm with thunder, lightning, hail, sleet quenched the flame in a night, and the next morning the forests were stripped to their swaying trunks and moaning branches.

Stark as a skeleton lay the land, with the sifting snow padding its bare ribs and ragged vertebræ like leprous flesh. The flowers were swept from the hills. No longer Carlisle saw in the dance of bluebells Joan's laughing eyes, no longer he caught in the breeze-blown daisies the golden shimmer of her hair. He cursed the laggard York boats and wore out his eyes trying to pierce Winnipeg's wrack of storm.

The lake raged incessantly, a Winter-harrowed maelstrom, its headlands hidden by the breaking waves, its islands frost-armored over, its beach littered with shore ice broken off and cast high like chips, its three hundred miles of rollers ramping to the clouds, roaring at the migrant rout scudding through the snow.

"Ae, Factor, it is not Wenipak now," described Waseyawin who with Missowa always watched at his shoulder. "It is Keche (the ocean) Wenipak."

"So," nodded Missowa, "but in three days the wind will lose its breath. The air will be sweet and warm."

"Indian Summer, eh, Missowa?" asked Carlisle.

"Thus the white men call it, but it is not of this earth. It comes from afar, from another world. It is the time when the spirits

of our forefathers rise to go forth on the Winter hunt, and in that time of calm, Factor, your boats will arrive."

MISSOWA'S words proved true. In three days the wind seemed to have blown out its lungs. The earth poised in a vacuum through which stole mellow lights, a haze of incense, chatter of birds, droning of bees, the gurgle of running rapids. The snow steamed on the slopes, and the river ice pooled with black water, when all in one fleet, manned by York Factory Indians and steered by half-breeds, out of the dank lake vapor the York boats rose like hoary ghost craft.

There had been a forest fire on the Hayes after the routing of the first boats up, they said, and these later ones had been forced to clear the stream of miles of half-burned trees.

Carlisle was ready for them. When the passing of the Autumn season showed him that there was no hope of getting the cargoes up-river by boat, he had made ready his toboggans, dog teams, snow-shoes and all his Winter gear. Now the transfer from boats to dog teams was arranged. Before all was completed the weather changed again.

Some invisible hand loosed the leash that held the wind, opened the snowgates of the sky. The frosts bit like the stroke of steel. Ahead lay a foot of river and lake ice covered with sand-like drifts.

At Chimawawin the Factor drew on Hampton for a fresh relay of men, dogs and toboggans and sent the first relay back to Grand Rapids to bring on the surplus stuff he had been compelled to leave behind for lack of outfits. At the Pas he repeated, sending back both relays, and out of the Pas on the home trail he marshaled a long train of toboggans each drawn by six huskies and loaded with one thousand pounds apiece.

With a surge of joy he turned his face upstream on the final relay. It was the Company's business, but his heart was not in it. His heart was up yonder on Sturgeon Lake where a mad girl would have finished by this time the food he had surreptitiously given her and no doubt be pining for more!

Of a truth, Joan was pining for more. Like medicine in her blood the provisions Carlisle had given her brought back the roses to her cheeks, but it was only for a little, and when the delicacies were done she failed more rapidly than before. Worry aided malnutrition.

The failure to capture the Hudson's Bay Company's York boats chagrined her and her father beyond measure. For Wayne's attempt was no mere hostile raid. It was a serious venture forced by the dire need of better sustenance, and the fact that Richelieu had outwitted them as well as Carlisle was bitter as hemlock drink.

Wayne brooded over it continually, and his brooding finally brought him to a reluctant decision.

"By the Doom, Joan, I'll have to send you out," he told her, his eyes dwelling longingly upon her. "We've never been separated before, but I think the time has come. It's too late now to get you out by canoe, but on the first snow I'll send you with Mason by dog team to St. Paul."

"No, no, father," Joan passionately protested. "I can't leave you here alone. I couldn't bear it alone at St. Paul. I'll fight it out with you. Oh! My dear, I want to. I must. I will. There," laughing her old gay laugh as she cast herself into his arms, "there's your defiant daughter, sir! But don't worry. I'll be all right, father. Let us both be cheerful. I'm sure something unexpected will turn up."

She had no communication with Cumberland House and knew nothing of the Hudson's Bay Company's plans, for since the battle over the York boats the tension had tightened about all three posts and rivalry had grown more bitter. The gates were always closed now and a watch kept upon the palisades.

Antagonism flared openly. The woods were full of surprises. By night daring raiders dashed out trying to put torch to their enemies' stockades. By day sharp skirmishes occurred. Wood-gathering parties were put to flight and hunters fired at on lonely forest trails.

Yet never in those eventful days had Joan seen or heard anything of Carlisle. She wondered at his seclusion, his silence. Perhaps he had been unable to secure more supplies for himself! But in any event he had intimated that he would not forget her if she were in need, and though she was not just sure that her pride would let her accept, nevertheless she resented the absence of any overture.

The weeks passed without any sign from

him, the geese went South, the snow fell, and the frost crackled. Her indisposition increased day by day. To the observant Wayne her trouble seemed threefold—the disturbing effect of the straight meat diet, the brooding over the Free-Trade prospects and an apparent canker, heart-longing, for which he could find no reason. Casting about for a reason, his mind turned upon Carlisle.

As a magnanimous enemy he had brought her food to the palisades, food which Wayne in a wrath was prone to throw away had it not been for the girl's actual need. Was he more than a magnanimous enemy? Wayne recalled the intimacy between him and Joan during the earlier part of the canoe journey from Grande Portage, also the fact that, together, they had voyaged the latter part of it without him.

Foreboding entered into him. Perhaps it was not worry, not dangerous diet he had to fear most! Perhaps something else was eating her youthful health away, the consuming desire of the void spaces of her heart, the emaciating hunger of her soul—a hunger he himself had suffered all these years.

"You had better let me send over to Cumberland House for Father Andrews," he suggested. "He's skilled with medicines, and no doubt he'll be able to give you something to help you."

"No, father, no, you mustn't," she flashed with genuine fire. "We ask nothing of the Hudson's Bay Company, and if word passes between the posts it must come first from Cumberland House."

STILL her sickness persisted, and Wayne cursed the eternal, nauseating, gorge-raising meat. It was affecting even his iron self. It was affecting all his men. He had disconcerting visions of scurvy and plague, and he told Mason to see that the men brewed spruce tea and drank it as a preventive. But the men had long been muttering among themselves, brewing a draft of trouble.

They grumbled at their fare, grumbled at the spruce tea and when no one was looking threw it in the snow. They had not bargained, they told each other, to live through the Winter eating each day three meals of flesh and flesh alone, all for the sake of the Indians' trade.

They knew that if they went out fifty or one hundred miles to the Indians' teepees in their hunting districts and took back what supplies they needed, they would stir the tribes to bloodshed and kill Wayne's trade and prestige at one stroke, but this they violently threatened to do. Straight meat was all right for Eskimos and pagan Indians, they stormed, but they had been born in the South!

Had Wayne not been so preoccupied with his daughter's condition, he would have marked the fermentation of discontent, the progression of discontent to open mutiny, but he spent most of his time with Joan who, lapsing from her usual vigorous activity, lay listless and tired upon a couch by the fireplace in his council-room. Through the shortening Winter days and the ever-lengthening nights he would sit smoking by her side, staring at the pale face upon the black bearskin couch-robes, racking his brains for a way out of the situation, pleading with her in vain to let him get medicines or send her South.

Mason warned him once that he feared the men might get out of hand, and he promised to look into the matter, but the warning slipped from his mind in the treacherous fashion things had been slipping of late. He never remembered it till his brigade leader stalked in on him and Joan one Wintry dusk with the news that the men had not come back that afternoon from their fuel-gathering.

Rudely shaken out of his thinking and brooding, Wayne leaped up, mentally alert, poised at his full height as if scented danger had put him on his guard.

"How's that, Mason?" he demanded. "How long have they been away? When'd they leave the post?"

"Jist at noon, Wayne, and I'm sartinly gittin' anxious."

"But maybe they're working late, Mason; maybe they've had a brush with Northwesters or Hudson's Bay choppers and are lying low to get in under cover of the dark."

The Missourian shook his head, his weather-wrinkled, alkali-seared face creasing deeper in his anxiety.

"Mebbe so," he doubted, "but thar ain't the ring of an ax or the spit of a rifle to be heerd. The woods is as still as a cussed vault."

"No noise, eh?" pondered Wayne. "That's suspicious. By the Doom, Mason, if they're trying to play me tricks, I'll have

the skins of the whole crowd! How many are left in the Fort?"

"You, me, Murdock, and three more."

"Well, tell Murdock and the three to stand keen watch. You and I'll go out and find them."

"Oh! Don't leave me here alone, father," pleaded Joan, sliding off the couch and glancing apprehensively at the Winter dark on the window-pane, at the somber shadows of the room. "Take me with you. I don't know what's the matter with me, but I'm all nerves, and I can't stay here alone."

"All right, Joan," he humored her. "It's not very far. Put on something warm and come with us."

Over her blanket-cloth suit she slipped her warmest capote, beautifully cased in ermine with the edge of the hood fringed with tails of the silver fox. She thrust her moccasined toes into the loops of her tasseled snowshoes and passed out between her father and Mason over the soft snows into the woods. Shuffling without a sound they went, Wayne and Mason on their broad bear's-paw shoes, their rifles thrown across their left arms in readiness.

Around them crept the eeriness of the Winter night, deep shadow in the underbrush, a half twilight in the open aisles, the snow's refraction of the starlight filtering through the festooned branches.

The forest was a fairyland filled with fantastic shapes, a strange cathedral packed with voiceless worshipers standing white-robed, huddled upon their knees or lying prone upon their hidden faces, and over all like the shroud of the dead spread the everlasting snow, cloaked on the tree boles, bossed on the stumps, draped from the interwoven branches, plumed on the spruce tops overhead.

From the roofed aisles they stepped out into the slashed clearing where the Free-Trading men had been at work. There lay the trampled, chip-littered crust, the felled trees, the sawn log lengths, the chopped stove wood, all just as it had been left. The very axes were still sunk in the scored blocks. A few ghostly hares at play about the piles vanished as the snowshoes began to clatter on the chips. Wayne stooped abruptly to examine something on the surface of the padded area.

"By the Doom—look!" he commanded harshly.

Joan and Mason stared speechless. Even in the poor light they recognized the litter Wayne pointed out, frozen bread crusts, rinds of bacon, the chocolate blotch of tea-leaves, a forgotten rum jug lying empty on the snow.

"Condemnation!" Wayne blazed in terrific wrath. "You're sure it's our chopping ground, Mason?"

"Tarnation sure!" avowed Mason. "Didn't I set them to work here and leave them workin'? And they ain't shifted sence, fer them's our axes."

"The cursed curs! There's only one place they could get that stuff to eat!"

Wayne was off as he spoke, running 'round the edge of the clearing, searching for the trail of the intruders.

"Here are their tracks!" he shouted. "Dozens of them, coming from the direction of Richelieu's post. The Northwesters wear longer-tailed snowshoes than ours, and there are the marks of both kinds going back. By Heaven, Richelieu has drawn them off! Come on, Mason. Come on, Joan."

At a great speed he lurched out of the woods again over the snows toward Fort Wayne, Joan and Mason running in the path he broke.

"Murdock, Murdock!" he yelled to the gatekeeper. "Send out your three. You yourself stand in the entrance with rifle ready. My men have been eating and drinking with the Northwesters."

DROPPING one armed man every hundred yards or so to form a line of communication with Murdock in the open gateway of his own fort, Wayne led on to Richelieu's post. Mason he kept by him, and Joan, in spite of his entreaties to stay back on this line of communication, followed persistently upon their heels.

The gateway of the Northwest post stood open as they ran up, and in the yellow glow that flooded from the lighted windows out across the trampled yard they could see Richelieu himself, a heavy military coat partially covering his resplendent uniform, standing in the entrance, waiting as if he had expected such a visit.

"*Comment?*" he chuckled when he saw their faces. "What do you want now?"

"My men—curse you!" exploded Wayne, his rifle threatening from the hip. "They're here. I want them quick!"

Richelieu was unarmed, but he showed

not the slightest fear of Wayne's nor Mason's weapons. He reached out and plucked Wayne by the arm, drawing him midway into the entrance and pointing to a big door in the mess building that faced the gate. The door had just opened wide to admit two Northwesters rolling in a keg of liquor, and it revealed a long, candle-lighted table inside, loaded with food and lined with feasting men.

"*Ciel*, see them!" Richelieu urged maliciously. "Hunger is a great chastener, Ralph Wayne. They were tempted, and they fell. There they are, yours and mine together. I am not holding yours. Go and take them."

With a growl Wayne shook off the hand on his arm and darted for the door.

"Mason, stay at the gate with Joan," he flung over his shoulder, "and put a bullet through that laughing devil if he so much as moves!"

Joan did not obey as her father expected she would. Instead, she inserted her hand within her capote, felt in the pocket of her blanket coat to assure herself that her pistol was there and followed her father up to the door of the mess building.

Inside reigned bedlam, pandemonium, drunken Northwesters and Free-Traders all mingled together, gorging themselves at the table, laughing, singing, shouting, smiting each other's backs at ribald stories and hammering the board with their liquor mugs. As wild a revel as ever he glimpsed, Wayne saw under the candle-light, and the sight sent him up the steps in a single jump.

In a whirl of passion he jammed between the two Northwesters who were rolling in the liquor keg, put sole upon the keg itself on the top step and sprang into the mess room with his rifle clubbed.

"You condemned traitors! You treacherous sneaks!" he denounced furiously, his gloomy face ablaze, his mustaches quivering, his rifle-butt swaying every second as if to crash down upon the nearest head. "You steal off into the woods and devour like dogs what these dirty Northwesters throw you, while my own daughter starves for a bit of good food. Get up! Get up on your drunken legs and out of this!"

They were too far gone in liquor for shame. Just a moment of bewildered staring, and a wave of laughter and jeering drowned his rage. They guffawed in his face, Northwester and Free-Trader alike, pounding the table more violently and making the room shake with their incoherent cries. While from the head of the feast one Harris, a Mississippi river-man and wood boss of the men that day, rose up teetering on his toes.

"Come'n' have a drink, Wayne," he invited, " 'n' I'll sing ye a li'l' song. Lissenere——"

"By the Doom, you were responsible, Harris!" Wayne roared in interruption. "And you're responsible still. Get the men out. Call them out, you, every staggering son of them, or as sure as you're drunk yourself, you'll never sing again!"

Wayne's rifle-butt poised over Harris's head, but without warning the two shrewd Northwesters in the doorway shot their rolling keg into Wayne's legs from behind. Wayne went down backward, flat on the floor, his rifle flying from his hands. The two Northwesters were upon him like cats, clutching and grappling, preventing his hands from securing the weapon again.

Joan gave a cry as she saw her father go down and groped in her coat for her pistol. Mason had also seen from the gate, and he sprang forward, his rifle outflung. With the lightning-like sighting of the woodsman he took a snap shot in the doorway, but he had bargained without Richelieu. The latter reached the step as quick as Mason, struck up the Missourian's rifle-barrel, sending the shot wild, and wrestled for the possession of the weapon.

Joan had her own weapon out, but both her father and Mason whirled in such a tangle of bodies that she dared not shoot for fear of injuring them. She hovered on the step of the mess-room doorway, screaming for aid through the frosty night.

"Murdock, Murdock!" she entreated frenziedly. "My father—here! Bring all the other men, quick!"

Tearing forward abreast the four broke through the gateway, but Richelieu had not been there alone. Back in the shadows of the stockade he had others lurking silently, waiting for such a rush. As Murdock and his three companions surged through, a dozen Northwesters leaped bodily upon them, bearing them down, smothering their spitting rifles in the snow.

"*Tiens*, Mademoiselle Joan," gloated Richelieu, emerging from the fighting group that overpowered Mason, "you are the only one left and you I will take myself!"

WITH the throb of the trapped wild thing in her breast Joan sprang aside from his reach, doubled back upon him like an agile hare and raced for the gateway, firing as she ran. The Northwesters still struggling to pinion Murdock and the other three Free-Traders, there was no one in the entrance to stop her, but Richelieu was gaining on her at every stride.

She had on her snowshoes, and he, in moccasins only, outran her on the packed snow of the yard. The lurch of her running caused her to shoot wild while Richelieu dodged and laughed jeeringly, straining every moment to catch her before she left the palisades.

Once, twice, three, four—five times she fired without effect. Then in the gateway she whirled, snapping the sixth and last shot in Richelieu's face only arm's length away. She saw his head flip back as if jolted with a fist. His body slumped, feet forward, on the snow and slid in against the open gate. Joan turned and ran with palpitating heart across the deep snows outside.

She knew there was not a Free-Trader left in Fort Wayne, no safety for her in her own post. There was only one destination in her mind—Cumberland House. There was only one object of appeal—Carlisle. With him there was at least sanctuary from Richelieu and his wild crew, and, magnanimous enemy as he was, he would surely come to the aid of her father as he had done once before!

Like the wind she ran, springing from the heel on the resilient webbing of her shoes, twisting her feet in the swing of the stride to clear her ankles of the fast-shifting frames, spurning the snow in white jets behind her.

She looked back fearfully over her shoulder to see if Richelieu had arisen again or if any of his men were following, but she saw nothing, heard nothing but the shouting and laughter in the Northwest post. The noise faded with the distance. She was alone on the cameo snows lighted faintly by the stars and a wan aurora that brightened the horizon to the northward.

Cumberland House loomed ahead, the snow-roofed buildings crouching within the drifted stockade, rimmed by the black wall of the forest, and she pressed to the limit of her speed. As she swerved into the trampled path before the gate, another sound beside the shuffling of her snow-shoes drifted to her ears.

She paused, listening in the void of the frost, and immediately her wilderness-trained ears interpreted the other sound, a blending of toboggan creak, husky pant, snow-shoe crunch, whip-crack—the weird harmony of a coming dog-train on the trail.

Wondering, Joan wheeled, staring out over the snow-blanketed ice, and under the play of the aurora she glimpsed it, revealed, concealed and revealed again by the flashlight flares, the whole train imaged against the pallid background like a painting of the Northland wastes.

She caught the impression in its entirety, the long, winding furrow dotted with the loaded toboggans each exactly alike except that the more distant diminished in size; the track beaters ahead of the dogs leaning forward on their smoking shoes; the straining, steaming, six-dog teams; the drivers on the run, their whips writhing through the air; the armed guards with rifles slung upon their hunched shoulders.

And the figure in front of all, tall, big of frame, flattening the drifts with great seven-foot snowshoes cut long and swift in their lines for open-river work, seemed to her vaguely familiar.

There was something in his poise of body, in his stride, in the way he held his head, looking straight forward under the hood of his capote that insinuated itself into her consciousness. With a flash of enlightenment, illumination of brain or heart she could not tell which, she suddenly knew him. Even under the furred capote she knew him.

"Paul, Paul!" she cried, and dashed down the snowy bank toward him.

CHAPTER X

THE RED DEATH

"YOU, Joan,—now the God of Northmen is good!" exulted Carlisle, catching her hands and bringing her to a stop upon her coasting snow-shoes. "I was never dreaming——"

But his gauntleted palm had closed upon the hard steel weapon in her grip, and his tone changed.

"Good heavens, girl, what's this? What's wrong?"

"Oh, come quickly, Paul, you and your

force!" she implored. "My father's a prisoner in Richelieu's post with all his men."

Involuntarily his mind flew back to the night when with this very weapon, and with other weapons more mighty, she had delayed him from reaching his York boats in time to prevent them being captured.

Yet he knew this was no ruse of hers. There was no doubting the sincerity of her words as she poured out the story of Richelieu's cunning and how with his hands almost upon her he had fallen to her last shot in the gateway of his stockade.

"Curse him!" Carlisle anathematized. "I hope it's through his dirty heart. Let me help you up the bank, Joan. There! My men will be up in a minute."

From the top of the bank he began to call out the news to them, to Eugene Drummond, Missowa, Waseyawin and their four middlemen who with the coming of Winter at Grand Rapids had put aside canoe and paddle for toboggan and racket. They together with the drivers from the lower river posts cracked their whips more lustily, urging on the dogs.

"*Marche! Marche!*" they called. "*Hu! Hu!*"

With the spume flying from the toboggan hoods they made a rush at the incline, teams clawing tenaciously, track-beaters hauling from the front with tow ropes, drivers shoving from behind. Toboggan after loaded toboggan undulated over the crest amid a mist-like shower of snow.

"*Chaw! Chaw!*" yelled the drivers, and the *giddes* swerved to the right into the beaten track that wound up to the gates of Cumberland House.

"Who comes there?" demanded the loud voice of Galt.

"Carlisle," was the answer. "Hurry up, Galt. There's trouble over at Richelieu's post, and we're needed there."

Immediately the gate swung open, and the dog-drivers cracked their whips anew.

"*Yee! Yee!*" they commanded.

The teams hauled 'round to the left with the sweep of the trail and galloped triumphantly into the yard where they were swallowed up by a rush of shouting men.

"Where's Andrews, Galt?" asked Carlisle, bellowing to make himself heard in the clamor.

"Here, Paul," answered Andrews himself, pushing through the crowd, garbed in his Winter gear, the heavy capote with the fur-fringed, helmet-like hood drawn as close about his face as he was wont to draw the dun cowl and mosquito veil in Summer. "I'm glad you're safely back, also glad to see you've got supplies."

"Forest fires delayed the York boats, Father, so that the frost caught us."

"Who's that with you? Ah—you, Miss Wayne."

"Yes, and it's only by grace of a lucky bullet that she is here," Carlisle told him. "Richelieu, you understand! Her father and his men are prisoners, she says, and she did well to escape."

"You brave girl!" eulogized Andrews, taking her hands. "But you didn't—kill him?" he added anxiously.

"I—I don't know," confessed Joan. "I fired in his face, and he went down. That's all I know."

"A job for you in any case, Father," intimated the Factor, "and who knows but you may have many more! Galt," giving orders to the chief trader, "have the drivers of the lower river posts keep guard here. Arm all our Cumberland House force and bring them on our heels."

HE TURNED through the entrance again with Joan and Andrews, and Eugene Drummond, Waseyawin, Missowa and their middlemen sped after, trailed by the rest of the Hudson's Bay men as fast as Galt could hand out the weapons.

As they skimmed back on Joan's tracks toward the Northwest post, they saw that the gate was still open, and at the entrance the girl hesitated with repugnance till Carlisle took her hand with a reassuring gesture.

There was blood upon the snow but no sign of Richelieu himself. Ahead of them, across the space of the yard, bulked the log mess building. The door was closed, but a yellow glow sprayed from the lighted square of the windows on either side of the door-jambs.

Listening, they could hear no singing or shouting, but the angry hum of voices buzzed from within as from a colossal hive of bees.

"We'd better leave our snow-shoes here," suggested Carlisle. "And don't make a sound in the yard."

He set the example by twisting his toes from their loops and sticking the tails of his shoes into the snow. The others did the

same, creeping after him, panther-footed in their moccasins, through the hard-packed yard. They reached the level of the steps without noise and, craning their necks, peered through the lighted window on the nearer side of the door.

Inside the rough-walled mess-room the feast was all disordered, the feasters all disarranged, although it was at once apparent that no hands had been laid upon the main body of the Free-Traders who had partly composed the feast.

Too drunk to care what company ruled the Northland, they slouched in their chairs or lolled forward across the table, grinning maudlinly at the plight of Wayne who had sought to chastise them. Upon half a dozen chairs Wayne, Mason, Murdock and the other three sober men sat in a row against the wall, their limbs bound tightly to the chair backs and the chair legs.

Across one cleared end of the table lay Richelieu, his uniform flashing bright under the candlelight as three or four Northwesters worked over him, and in the ministering hands those outside could see his muscles stir slightly.

"He's not dead, anyway, thank Heaven!" whispered Andrews.

"Then the devil must have him in special keeping!" growled Carlisle under his breath as he laid his hand quietly on the latch. "Stand well to one side of the door jamb, Joan, and you, Andrews, in case of shooting."

He swung the door wide and stepped swiftly upon the doorsill, two long pistols in his hands covering the packed room.

"*Bon soir, messieurs!*" he greeted them mockingly.

He gave neither order nor threat, yet instinctively they knew his intent and froze into immobility, staring at his huge figure in the frost-rimmed, furred capote and at the other figures, likewise frost-rimed, who crowded behind him on the steps, their long-barreled rifles looking down the table.

"So Richelieu met with a little accident in his game," Carlisle laughed. "Is he badly hurt?"

"Not badly we think, *m'sieu'*," returned one of the Northwesters somewhat sullenly, "but you have a doctoring priest there. He could tell."

"Surely," acquiesced Carlisle. "Will you take a look at him, Father?"

He made room for Andrews to push in, and the priest walked up to the table where Richelieu lay.

"Through the muscles of his neck, *Père*," the Frenchman pointed out the course of the ball. "He is just on the edge of—how do you say it?—coming to!"

"Yes," nodded Andrews, passing a lighted candle over Richelieu as he lay, "and no great danger in that ball through his neck muscles! But do you see what is all through his face?"

"Frost scars?" hazarded the Northwester, staring.

"Frost scars? No, you never saw frost scars like those. The man has smallpox!"

Swifter and harder than lead the diagnosis hit them. Every one in the room seemed to start as if from a violent shock. The Northwesters around Richelieu threw up their arms before their faces in tangible defense against the plague, while all the rest crossed themselves in palpable terror.

Even the slouching Free-Traders were stirred. The horrible significance of the word penetrated their drunken consciousnesses. They stood up unsteadily, their faces whitening, sucking in their breaths in nervous clicks.

Yet only for an instant did the great crowd cower. Abruptly, in a frantic rush, in an insane stampede they dashed for the doorway.

Carlisle's big frame blocked the exit, and he met the rush with clubbed pistols. Like cattle they came, shoving, trampling, frenzied with fear. Three of them went down from his clubbed weapons. A dozen more were hurled back from the stiff rifle barrels around him, as from the ends of lances.

The rout fell aside, temporarily checked, swerved and made for the windows. Swinging chairs, they smashed away the glass and frames, but at Carlisle's command several of his men had sprung to the outside of the windows, and an array of rifle-barrels speared the Northwesters back into the room.

"Stop!" roared Carlisle through the crashing babel. "Stop your panic or I'll order my men to shoot. They can rake the whole place from the door and windows. Which will you face: smallpox or bullets?"

The threat stayed for a little their wild frenzy, and Carlisle seized upon the moment of their uncertainty to try to prevent another stampede.

"There's no use in making confounded fools of yourselves," he told them. "You have to face the situation anyway, so why not face it like men? I'm not going to let you get away to any other post or Indian camp to spread the infection there. Just make up your minds to fight a sane fight here. First, some Free-Trader cut loose Wayne and the rest!"

HARRIS, the Mississippi River man who had wanted to sing Wayne a song, stepped forth. The crisis had sobered him like a dash of cold water, and he quickly slit the chair lashings with his sheath knife, freeing the six men.

"Now, Wayne, you and your Free-Traders are under quarantine with the Northwesters," Carlisle informed him. "I hope you're not thinking of making any trouble about it. If you are, make it right now and we'll have it over with."

"Do you take me for a cursed fool?" blazed Wayne. "I know smallpox. I had it myself once on the Red River. My men have been hobnobbing with these Northwesters and two of the bloody dogs mauled me all over. Why, I wouldn't dream of going back to my post. I wouldn't go near my worst enemy. I wouldn't rub up against you, Carlisle, and I hate you worse than a hundred hells."

"Thanks," Carlisle sent back sarcastically. "Wayne, you're no hypocrite, anyway!"

"But for heaven's sake, watch my girl," Wayne implored in his next breath. "Keep her away from this place. Joan, stand back from the doorway, there."

"I'm all right, father," Joan assured him. "I've never been in the room."

"Did Richelieu touch you, girl?"

"No, father, no, he didn't. And how I wish you'd never gone in after your men!"

"So do I, though I'm not afraid for myself," growled her father. "But it can't be helped now. Anyhow not likely anything will come of it. What's the program, Carlisle?"

"Everybody parade for inspection," Carlisle answered. "You'll all pass before Andrews. Any further cases remain here in the mess-room with Richelieu. The rest go over to the trading-room till we see what develops. Richelieu's house we'll save for the recoveries. File up, every one!"

Some bold, some fearful, nearly all nervous, they passed in review before the priest, who examined each one closely for symptoms with his lighted candle. Now and then he put a question bearing on their general health or diet.

Twice he motioned a Northwester out of the line to sit down in a chair by the table. There was scarcely need to examine the Free-Traders, since they had been exposed to infection only that day, but for the impression of equality in the unfortunate circumstance Andrews scanned them over with the rest.

"Only the two cases besides Richelieu," he announced when he had finished his inspection.

"All right, the two cases can clear this room and knock together three bunks while the rest go to the trading-room as I said," directed Carlisle.

"But *bon Dieu*," burst out the Northwester Dentaire, he of the pointed mustache and the large hawked nose, "do you mean to pack us there like curs waiting for the Red Death to come and choose which one?"

"Where else can I put you?" countered Carlisle. "Out in the freezing woods?"

"I—I will not go," Dentaire shrieked, his pale face contracting in convulsive muscular twitchings, his eyes staring wide, horrific, his trembling fingers never ceasing their continual crossing. "*Non! Non!* Nor *mes camarades* either!"

"Come out first, you!" ordered Carlisle, sensing a new outbreak and leveling his weapons at Dentaire.

Dentaire dived suddenly behind the crowd and with a sweep of his feet kicked out the legs of the big sheet-iron stove in the middle of the room. With a crash the mass of red-hot metal fell upon the floor, and its bushels of glowing coals poured out across the planks. Dry as dead moss, the slivery planks blazed up instantaneously, and not content with fire in one place Dentaire scattered the coals to all corners of the room.

"You hold us here to do your will?" he gibbered behind the screen of his fellows, "You will not let us out of the room? *Voilà*, then, there will be no room. The candles, *mes camarades*—the candles *aussi!*"

They seized them from the table and flung them lighted into anything inflammable, into the woodbox, into the cupboard, into piles of old papers on the shelves about the

walls. The place was aflame in all quarters at once, choked with smoke and shaken to its foundations by the concerted rush to escape.

Dentaire, slim, swift as a dancing-master, was in the van of those who surged to the doorway. Half-minded at first to put a ball through him, Carlisle lowered his weapons and made way. The room was now a roaring furnace, and there was no holding men in it to be burned to death.

"Back from the door and windows," he ordered. "Galt, shut the gate and you, Joan, keep close to me. Back, men, I say, and for the lives of you don't touch any of them!"

"*Oui*, touch us at your peril," warned Dentaire. "Stop us at your doom. But put the hand on us and receive the Red Death!"

In a stream they gushed forth, leaping down the steps, vaulting over the window-sills, Northwesters and Free-Traders together in wild flight. In strange anomaly, armed men backing away from men only partly armed, the Hudson's Bay force gave them the right of way. Weapons could hold domination over them penned within walls but not as a mad horde here in the open where a hand grip might prove more deadly than a bullet.

"Shoot!" Dentaire shrieked crazily. "Shoot if you have the thought to keep us. You may kill one, two, six, a dozen, but I swear by the Virgin that the rest will lay the plague on you with their fingers! Come on, *mes camarades*, come on!"

"The demented fool!" denounced Carlisle helplessly. "The whole mob of demented fools! Hold your fire, men. The idiot means what he says."

The rush passed them, some making for the gate, some for the shed next the store where the snow-shoes and toboggans were kept. Galt had managed to wedge the gate bar so that it could not be withdrawn, but the crazed mob was not to be denied. Many climbed up on the palisades to the top of the gate. Many more groveled in the snow at the bottom, worming their shoulders under the heavy barrier. With a united heave they tore the gate bodily from its hinges and hurled it aside.

Meanwhile their comrades had cast down the toboggans, thrown on the grub-bags from the store, seized their snow-shoes and rushed to join them. Together the two sections surged through the gateway, Northwesters and Free-Traders still mingled, all Richelieu's Frenchmen and post Indians, all Wayne's men of the Missouri, men of the Mississippi, men of the Red, his Crees and Chippewayans—the whole crowd that had been drinking with the Northwesters that day.

Their panic seemed to increase as they ran. They strained forward, bound for immunity wherever they might find it, falling over each other upon the aurora-lighted snows till they disappeared into the black mystery of the surrounding forest.

EXCEPT the Hudson's Bay forces, none remained in the yard but Richelieu whom Andrews and Wayne had carried out and laid down within the light and heat of the fire, Wayne himself, Mason, Murdock and the three sober Free-Traders. Having contracted the disease one Summer while doctoring Indian camps on Eabamet Lake, Andrews, like Wayne, had no fear of contamination himself, yet he was careful to keep his patient apart from the others.

Although Richelieu stirred from time to time, he had never opened his lips or his eyes. Upon his forehead, close up to the hair, the priest could discern a large bruise where he had evidently struck his head against the gate in falling.

"The head blow is the cause of his unconsciousness rather than the neck wound," Andrews pointed out to Carlisle and the others who came peering from a respectful distance. "Where shall we take him, Paul? Is there any chance of saving the other buildings?"

"Not the slightest chance," Carlisle decided. "We'll do well if we keep the fire inside the palisades. We don't want it to get into that fringe of trees and 'round through the forest to the other posts. Richelieu must stay where he is for a little. He'll not be cold in this heat."

"You won't risk trying to get anything out, Paul—the supplies or the furs?" asked Joan anxiously.

Carlisle shook his head grimly.

"No, the risk's too great! They've been handling the food and pelts, you see. We daren't touch anything, but I think we'll level the store and fur house to hold the flames as low as possible."

He ran outside the palisades with Galt, Drummond and others and came back bearing long trunks of young spruce that had been drawn up from the woods for fuel. These were five or six inches through and stripped of their branches, of a fit size to be handled as battering rams.

The mess building was all a-roar, throbbing on the night like the fire-pit of some gigantic engine, belching flame through windows and door and the roof that was commencing to sag.

The heat was terrific, lance-like, unbearable upon the uncovered flesh, but with the hoods of their capotes puckered tight to shield their faces from the flames, Carlisle and his men crept up to the buildings with the long spruce trunks in their gauntleted hands.

With swing and prod, swing and prod they battered off the already burning roof troughs of the fur room, exposing the top logs which they began to rattle down tier by tier, but the fire was quicker than they.

It caught on the walls and beams and the pelts that hung thereon, and the flare of the greasy fats shot fifty feet in the air.

"What a waste!" deplored Joan, as Carlisle and the men were forced to fall back from the geyser of flame. "What a waste of splendid fur!"

"Yes, but it couldn't be otherwise," observed Carlisle. "We couldn't have saved it even if we had wanted to. The heat's enough to shrivel one!"

Still it was with a qualm of regret that he gazed over his shoulder as he rushed in again toward the store. Mink, marten, otter, ermine, costly, beautiful, blazed and wrinkled before his eyes; rare silver and black-fox skins singed and smouldered, the silky fur curling up like downy feathers to the licking flame. He saw it as desecration, as profanation, as a crime against the enduring wild—and all the handiwork of the panic-stricken Dentaire!

The roof of the store he got off before the fire reached it. The wall logs thundered down amid clanking showers of cooking utensils, knives, axes and other trade-stuff from the shelves, his own trade-stuff that Richelieu had captured in his York boats. Piled upon the floor, standing revealed under the fire's glare, showed his own food supplies captured at the same time along with the trade-stuff.

"There were greases in the supplies, Galt," he told his chief-trader, "pork and such, and some kegs of powder that might be dangerous. Pass the kegs along as I shove them out."

One by one with his pole butt he rolled the barrels and kegs off the floor, and they were prodded far back into the snow beyond the fire zone. Then he pushed down the top tier of the flour bags, stacked in layers of four. Three of the sacks fell with solid, dusty thuds. The fourth struck lightly and bounced to the feet of Galt.

"What's that, Henry?" asked Carlisle. "Not heavy enough for flour, is it?"

The chief-trader stooped and scrutinized it by the brilliant light, discerning a canvas dunnage bag with drawstrings in its mouth. It bore the customary marking H. B. C., and as Galt turned it over with his pole the name "Cotameg" stared him in the face.

"By Nenaubosho (the Cree Evil Spirit)!" he exclaimed. "It's the Chippewa's gear-bag, Factor. Piled in by mistake among the flour sacks when they captured your boats!"

"By Jove, Galt, is that so?" cried Carlisle, coming over to look. "Unlucky Cotameg! You buried him without his gear, eh?"

"We had to," declared Galt. "We couldn't find his gear, and I guess it was here all the time."

With a thud of his pole he broke the drawstrings in the mouth of the bag, thrust the end of the pole into the open mouth and shook it. Out rolled worn moccasins, soiled trousers of buckskin, frowsy parfleches of a filthiness unimaginable.

"Shades of bold Rupert!" blurted Carlisle. "I didn't know he was as dirty as all that. Is that the only gear he owned?"

But Galt's eyes were brighter than Carlisle had ever seen eyes of Cree shading. His face was more violently astounded than Carlisle had ever beheld a face of Cree casting.

"It's—it's not Cotameg's," he stammered, even his voice losing the unemotional timbre of his mother's tongue. "It's old White Loon's and his family's—the smallpox Indians I stopped from coming in to Cumberland House!"

"By heavens, Galt, are you sure?" bellowed Carlisle.

"Sure? Didn't I stand and see them strip it off at my orders? There are five moccasins, all of different sizes. White Loon had two sons, a nephew and a cousin with him, you remember!

"Besides, I went out to drop a few trees on their camp and burn it at the first snow when there was no danger of firing the forest, but the clothes were gone. I put the theft down to the sneaky wolverines, set fire to the teepee and thought no more about it."

"But, Galt, Cotameg didn't take and put them in his gear-bag. You understand Indians, and you know no Indian born would go near the smallpox camp at Carcajou Cove, much less lay a hand on anything there."

"I know," nodded Galt, pushing bag and all back into the fire. "It was no Indian who put them in Cotameg's bag. It was a white man, a white man with the iron nerve of the devil."

"Then who was that white man?" propounded Carlisle.

TO the chief-trader he put the question, to Eugene Drummond and all the Hudson's Bay forces behind, to Joan hovering as near as the flames would let her, to Wayne and his five faithfuls grouped by themselves off to one side.

They stared at him unanswering, stricken dumb by the horrible enormity of the thing, and as he looked into their eyes, recollections of many past incidents flashed unbidden through Carlisle's mind.

He remembered that it was Cotameg who had let the Northwest mail-courier Bertand escape into Grande Portage, remembered Cotameg's frequent absences from Cumberland House, his delay in coming in to the post from his fishing upon the morning he wanted to send him to the Pas, and the fact that Richelieu knew he had sent for his York boats and was on the watch for their coming.

"I see it now!" he burst out suddenly. "Cotameg was in Richelieu's pay from the first. The Chippewa must have been at the Northwest post that Sunday morning I sent him and Smoking Pine down-river, and that's when his gear-bag was filled unknown to him. It was a plan to turn the plague loose in Cumberland House, but in the ways of the North the bag came back untouched to the one who filled it."

"My God, Paul," cried Joan shuddering, "how could any man do that?"

"He ain't wan man," put in Drummond promptly. "He be wan flamin' *diable*, an' if I be had ma way, I'm would t'row heem back into de fire w'ere he be come from."

"That's the way to talk, Drummond," supported Wayne. "It's only what he deserves."

"Maybe there's worse than fire in store for him," reminded Andrews, prophetically. "He's fully conscious now, Paul. His eyes are open."

Richelieu awoke in a daze, raising himself up on his elbow and staring at the blazing walls which had burned low enough to allow the Hudson's Bay men to dart in and scoop snow upon the flames with their long snow-shoes used as shovels.

"Name of a name!" he blurted, unable to comprehend the crimson glare, the shoveling figures of the men and the hiss of the snow masses smothering the fire. "I dreamed I was on the brink of hell. *Comment?* Has my dream come true?"

"Partly," explained Carlisle, grimly striding over to him. "Your men set fire to your post and scattered to the thirty-two points of the North when they heard you had smallpox!"

"Smallpox!" echoed Richelieu unbelievingly.

"Yes, the Red Death! Cotameg's dunnage-bag came back to you among the food-sacks."

Richelieu's lips parted stiffly, but Carlisle poised his moccasined foot as if to spurn him into the dying conflagration.

"Don't say a word, Richelieu!" he warned passionately. "Not a cursed word or in you go!"

Richelieu closed his lips again, and Carlisle dropped his foot.

"I guess we'll get a toboggan and run him across to Cumberland House," he told Andrews. "Eugene, run and fetch it. I'll set aside one of my buildings for him alone."

"Condemnation, no you won't, Carlisle!" expostulated Wayne. "I've no love for you as I said, but I'm a white man. None of your Hudson's Bay traders have been exposed to infection. We six Free-Traders have. Besides, I've had it. Andrews has had it. So we'll take Andrews and Richelieu to Fort Wayne with us. Richelieu can be put in the fur house. We'll use the trading-room, and Andrews may have my own quarters."

"By Jove, you are a white man, Wayne!" accepted Carlisle, his face lighting up. "I wouldn't have asked it of you, but I take your offer in the spirit in which it's given."

"There's a little selfishness in it," Wayne confessed. "I would go crazy if Joan were near any infection, and you'll have to give her quarters at Cumberland House. Send your men over now to my post for her stuff and the furs and everything but the bare necessities we'll use. They can gut the buildings before we go into them. And about the furs, you'll keep them in trust only, so that there will be no trouble over them!"

"All right," agreed Carlisle heartily, hastening to issue his orders and to direct Drummond to place the toboggan he had brought so that Richelieu might roll onto it. "And, Wayne, I'll leave you a load of provisions at your palisade gate."

"Thanks," nodded Wayne. "I'll take them in the spirit they're given."

He passed with his five Free-Traders through the gateway. Andrews, Drummond, Galt and the other Hudson's Bay men followed after, drawing Richelieu upon the toboggan. Carlisle turned from a last inspection of the smoking post ruins and gave Joan his hand for the run across the snows to Cumberland House.

"We, too, are in isolation," he observed with a whimsical laugh. "Do you happen to care, Joan?"

She gave him a tantalizing smile as they raced side by side.

"As long as I can go to my father's stockade every day, talk to him and know that he is all right, I—why, I expect to be very comfortable in Cumberland House," she evaded naively. "And do you know what I'm going to make you do the very minute we get there, Paul?"

"What?" he challenged.

"Cook me a full course-dinner!" Joan decreed.

CHAPTER XI

OOCHEMEGOU KESIGOW

THE full tale of the flight of the Sturgeon Lake Northwesters and Free-Traders did not come down the Saskatchewan to Carlisle for several weeks. Christmas Day passed without the arrival of any of his Indian trappers, but about three o'clock on New Year's Day the jingle of bells brought him and Joan running to the door.

A grand Cree cavalcade they beheld, toboggans and carioles drawn by gaily caparisoned dogs with bead-worked blankets on their backs and bells upon their collars. Pottering in the rear, the squaws drove the teams with the duffle, children and furs packed into the carioles, but the hunters sped in front, gorgeous in their new capotes and leggings fringed with porcupine quills.

At Carlisle's beckoning they trooped up to the steps where he stood, led by old Soaring Eagle, a chief of the tribes and one of the best fur-takers on his books.

"It is Oochemegou Kesigow—the New Year's—the Kissing Day of the Crees, when every man is supposed to kiss every woman in sight— Factor," Soaring Eagle greeted, "and we are here according to our custom."

"That is good, Soaring Eagle," returned Carlisle gravely, albeit there was a twinkle in his eye as his glance met Joan's. "There is a gift for each one of you at the store when you trade your furs. How was the catch?"

"We took much fur, Factor," reported Soaring Eagle, "but we will take no more in that upper country. After the trade and feast we will hunt toward the Wenipak. The Red Death is raging yonder, and we fear it stalking through our teepees."

"Where, Soaring Eagle?" demanded Joan anxiously. "Where is it raging?"

"Where roams the wind, Golden Daughter? Where fall the forest leaves? The Red Death is killing out the posts and tribes of the French Company and the Free-Trading men as red fire runs among the trees. So my far-journeying tribesmen bring the word."

"It hasn't got among our own Indians, then, or into our own posts?" asked Carlisle with concern.

"No," declared Soaring Eagle, "for the struggle among the companies has been bitter and nothing but rifle balls has passed between. But the tribes of the Hudson's Bay Company in the other districts are fearful even as we. They are fleeing from the Red Death, going east toward James Bay, south upon the prairie or north to the Barren Lands."

"Heavens!" ejaculated Carlisle. "That means the closing of those posts. Are there no districts free from it at all?"

"The tales of the Indian runners say that it has not spread as far as Fort des Prairies yet nor to the Athabasca, but that all posts are closed against newcomers."

Carlisle pointed toward Richelieu's dismantled post.

"There's where the Red Death started, Soaring Eagle," he informed.

"So ran the story of those who fled among the Indians and posts of the other districts," nodded the old chief.

"And there," went on Carlisle, pointing to Fort Wayne, "the Northwest leader is sick with it. There the Free-Trade leader watches by the bed of Mason, the only one left alive of five faithful men. There our praying man is with them, all under the plague."

"So," nodded Soaring Eagle, unmoved. "You are not afraid?"

"I am not afraid, Factor. If it was not good for us to come, you would have sent a runner to warn us. We are here, and after the feast we trail to the Wenipak."

"It is well," concluded Carlisle. "Go to the store now and Galt will give you your gifts."

"It is Oochemegou Kesigow," reminded Soaring Eagle, looking at Joan.

Carlisle's eyes twinkled again, but Joan was equal to the occasion.

"I kiss you all," she spoke tacitly in Cree, touching her finger-tips to her lips and tossing them the caress.

Soaring Eagle and the others gravely acknowledged the salute, catching the kiss in mid-air on their own finger-tips and carry it to their mouths; then they stalked off to the store.

CARLISLE backed hastily indoors under Joan's indignant assault.

"You wanted him to say it," she accused. "Just wait till you have to salute all the greasy squaws! But, seriously, Paul, isn't it horrible news?"

"It's very bad," admitted Carlisle with a shake of his head. "Yet don't let it spoil our New Year's dinner, Joan. I wouldn't care about myself, but I want Lewis and the men of the other posts to enjoy themselves. You see it's the only break for them in the whole Winter."

"I won't let the news spoil it," she promised. "Though there's fear in my heart!"

"Fear of what?"

"Fear that it means the end of my father's already shaken power!"

"I don't know," Carlisle deftly hedged. "I can't tell anything about it till I get word how things stand in the other districts from official quarters. The governor promised when I left James Bay to have a message routed through before Spring to let me know the exact situation. But hurry, Joan. It will soon be dark, and the men will be over from the store."

Joan hastened about, directing the work of the two young Cree maids in the kitchen, putting the finishing touches upon her New Year's dinner spread upon the long table in the Factor's council-room, and while he watched her gliding about, Carlisle marveled at the miracle of a woman's touch in softening the bare austerity of his former quarters.

He had given the house up to her entirely since the night Richelieu's post was wrecked and the rest went to Fort Wayne, to do with it what she willed.

He himself had taken business and sleeping quarters in Galt's trading-room with Galt and Drummond, and it was ever a source of pleasure to them to pass from that rough environment into this newly consecrated feminine sphere for their meals or to spend the long, storm-bitten Winter evenings before the roaring birch logs of the fireplace.

The possessions transferred from Fort Wayne before it went under quarantine she had used to garnish Cumberland House. Formerly Carlisle's council-room contained nothing but table and chairs, guiltless of any adornment. Now the bare planks of the floor were hidden under a plethora of fur rugs, skins of the wolf, lynx, black and grizzly bears; the bare walls were covered with curios, weapons of the savage tribes, antlers of the red deer, moose and caribou, horns of mountain-sheep and musk-ox.

Her cushions, filled with downy wild-goose feathers, covered with leather in colored patterns and trimmed with Indian bead-work, padded the chairs. Her couch, luxuriously fur-robed, invited lounging by the fireplace; her pictures decorated the mantel above.

In one corner stood her harpsichord brought in by the Red River route from St. Paul. While upon a shelved cabinet beside was piled her music and her library, a collection begun while schooling at St. Paul and added to at every opportunity—history, travel, poetry, French and Spanish novels which she read in the original.

Upon the table she hovered over in the deepening dusk of the room was arrayed her cherished linen, flat silverware, china, the magnificent silver tea-service and tall brass candelabra.

The latter she filled with candles, and as she lighted them, the Hudson's Bay officers came tramping over from the store, Drummond, Galt, Lewis in from the Pas, Lea from the Nepowin, Garry from Moose Lake, Hampton from Chimawawin, Jarvis from Grand Rapids, Wells from the Seepanock Channel.

"*Bon soir*, Mademoiselle Wayne," greeted Drummond, opening the door in the lead, his volatile face a-quiver with suppressed merriment. "Wan happy New Year to you, an' I'm wondaire if you remembaire dis day be Oochemegou Kesigow?"

"Soaring Eagle told you, Eugene," flashed Joan intuitively, breaking into laughter with them all. "But it shall never be said that I did less for white men than for red. You may kiss my hand, sir."

With the air of an old-world courtier Drummond bent over it, then all his companions, and Joan with a queenly gesture waved them to the table.

"The feast is ready; be seated, gentlemen," she directed.

She took her stately place behind the silver tea-service. Carlisle took his opposite her, beyond the branching candelabra, at the foot of the table, and the other officers ranged themselves on either side. Under the mellow candlelight they dined like true lords of the North in the presence of a gracious lady.

Course by course the quiet-footed Cree maids served the meal—soup of delicious moose meat, stewed ptarmigan breasts garnished with forest herbs, fish course of flaky lake trout, the savory dressed goose, the Christmas pudding and cake and the wines of Sicily and Madeira.

THEN while the men lighted the fragrant Company tobacco in their pipes, Joan stole away to her instrument, playing soft, dreamy airs that wafted like Summer winds through the hazy incense of the room. As they smoked and listened, the officers gave their brief verbal reports to Carlisle, so much fur taken in trade, this and that incident in the post routine, such and such friction with the adherents of the rival companies.

Succinctly Garry told how a vagrant party of Free-Traders sacked two of his fur trains on Moose Lake. Lea described the looting of his Nepowin post by a tribe of the French Company's Indians and his struggle to save the greater part of the fur which he had managed to cache safely on the Saskatchewan by the mouth of Ptarmigan Creek.

Wells related how he had captured a Northwest guide forerouteing the Seepanock Channel for brigades in the Spring and sent him southward on *La Longue Traverse* to the Assiniboine.

"But never fear, zur," Wells concluded in his broad wheeze, "they zhan't get through there. I will zee to't."

Their tones were low so as not to raise discord in the music's harmony. Joan's playing was zephyr-like, unobtrusive as meditation, so as not to break the thread of their council. But as the talk lagged and lapsed, her music increased in volume, and the men heard the airs of their own lands swelling in their ears.

With magic interpretation she played them back to those lands, to the rugged Highlands, the English downs, the vineyards of sunny France. Their battle chants, their hymns of unction, their folk legends, their hearth songs, the songs that never die she played them, and their hearts went out to their far-off homes.

Galt drove an imaginary paddle down to the Sault, home of the white adventurer who had fathered him and his old mother of the Crees. Drummond lay sun-basking under the loom of the Pyrenees on the banks of the River Adour. Garry and Lea trod again their beloved Inverness and Cromarty. Hampton climbed his Devon hills. Jarvis saw and heard the color and rattle of London. Wells stood under the waving trees upon the green lawns of the Squire's house. Lewis watched with his aged eyes the gray seas breaking upon the foamy crags which whelped him, in his nostrils the salted fog, in his soul the void that runs:

From the dim shielding of the misty island
Mountains divide us and a world of seas,
But still ours hearts are true, our hearts are Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

On and on she played while they drifted in their dreams and Carlisle lay back in his chair before the fireplace watching her through the blue wreaths of his pipe smoke. Ethereal, intangible she seemed through the blur, the candlelight filtering softly on her spun-gold hair and golden satin dress and striking the facets of a few choice rings upon her nimble fingers.

For him, too, her magic was potent. He was a little boy again in the post of Niagara; his was the boyish vision of its pageants and alarms; and his was the boyish memory of his father, tall, straight, handsome in the dashing uniform of a captain of the Rangers —all in that old day before his mother died.

When the music ceased they did not know it till they saw Joan slipping off the stool and coming toward them through the haze.

"Isn't it time to start their dance, Paul?" she smiled. "You know I want to take my father his own New Year's dinner very soon."

"Yes, yes," assented Carlisle, returning from his childhood's vision and dropping his pipe ashes into the birch logs, "we'll go right over and set things going and then see about the dinner."

He helped her on with the beautiful ermine capote, its hood fringed with tails of the silver fox, and they followed the men across to the store buildings and into the trading-room.

The trading-room was full of whites, breeds and Indians of both sexes waiting expectantly. They, like Carlisle's officers, had feasted to the full, and now they were ready for the merriment.

The room was cleared for the occasion, benches ranged 'round the sides, and the walls and ceiling lined with bright red calico and hung with the New Year's decorations of evergreens and scarlet swamp berries. Upon Galt's counter were placed three chairs for the musicians, high up under the burning candles upon the shelves.

One of these chairs Galt took himself with his violin. Drummond and Jarvis climbed up on either side of him with bass viol and piccolo. The crowd upon the floor at Carlisle's direction resolved itself into couples, forming a Circassian circle 'round the room, and to the vamping of the violin strings the dance was on.

Buoyantly, madly, they danced, all their spirits congealed through long, lonely months melting instantly in the warmth of human companionship and effervescing in flourish, laughter and shout. Though Carlisle and Joan withdrew after the first dance, the gaiety did not pause. They had given it the necessary impetus. The feet of joyous abandon were loosed.

While they watched a little, the square dances, string dances and round dances shuttled in quick succession. The musicians changed, the instruments changed, violin, viol and piccolo giving way to mandolin, tambourine or bagpipes, but the tide of music and restless muscles flowed perpetually.

One moment it was Galt leading the Feather Dance of the tribes, the next Drummond banging the tambourine he had learned from his Spanish neighbors and reeling a Spanish whirl, or, again, Lewis strutting the length of the room, his droning bag under his arm, skirling away on the pipes to the Highland steps.

FROM that carnival of color and movement Carlisle and Joan were never missed when they stole unostentatiously back to the Factor's house. The Cree maids had cleared the table, but according to Joan's instructions they had reserved a choice portion of each course, enough for Wayne and Andrews and Mason if he should have the heart to taste the soup or nibble a ptarmigan breast.

It was packed in a large lidded basket woven of willow by the Cree weavers, all ready to be warmed up and eaten, and Carlisle, adding a bottle of wine and a canister of tobacco, hung the basket over his shoulder by its leather thong.

The sound of the dance echoed forth from the trading-room as they passed by and on along the fringe of trees toward the campfires of the Crees. Here in the shelter of the forest all those in from the trap-lines had made open bivouac, snow-walled quadrangles scraped to earth, floored with spruce boughs and warmed by abundant fires.

A few old squaws, too old to care for the revelry in the post, were tending the fires, while 'round the blaze sprawled many groups of wolf-dogs, stick-tied to prevent them wandering or fighting, lying with feet outstretched to the heat or worming forward luxuriously upon their bellies.

Each team relaxed by themselves, snarling defiance at any inquisitive encroacher from a strange outfit and baring fangs in meteor-like leap and retreat at the end of their leashes. On one side of the fire in the end quadrangle which they skirted, an especially large five-dog team lay by an upended cariole, and Carlisle pointed them out to Joan.

"Those big Hudson's Bays are Soaring Eagle's dogs," he informed her. "Aren't they splendid brutes? They weigh one hun-

dred and fifty pounds apiece, and they're the fastest dogs in my district."

The Cree camp-fires winked fainter behind them, and they neared the palisades of Fort Wayne. Upon the snows in front of the entrance they could see a black figure pacing up and down and dancing on his snow-shoes to keep warm, the Indian guard posted there to prevent curious huskies from clawing a way under the gate or unwarned hunters from inadvertently stumbling into the plague.

"Blow your whistle, Burning Cloud," ordered Carlisle, when the guard challenged.

Burning Cloud with a grunt of recognition complied, sending a shrill screeching note through the frosty air, the signal for Wayne to come to the entrance. The gate had been fitted with an outside bar for greater facility in handling, and this Burning Cloud withdrew, swinging the barrier wide. The yellow blotch of an opened door showed in the post, with Wayne's fur-capped head touching the top of the seven-foot doorway as he emerged.

"Paul, are you going to tell him about his posts and Indians?" Joan whispered while Wayne, wrapped in a big bearskin coat, crunched across the yard.

"I don't know," Carlisle replied. "I thought I might if he asked. Why?"

"Don't tell him," she pleaded. "You know his nature, all gloom and bitterness and through no molding of his own! He's had too much to bear already with the cutting off of his trade, semi-starvation, the loss of his post men and this hateful isolation here. Now a new calamity would lie like a mountain on his spirit to weight him down. Please don't tell him, Paul—yet!"

"I won't, then Joan," he agreed. "You know I don't want to heap trouble on him. Hello, Wayne," calling cheerily to the Free-Trader, "a happy New Year to you! That sounds like mockery, but I mean as happy as the circumstances allow. Thanks to Joan, we had a real New Year's dinner at Cumberland House, and she's brought you your share."

He stepped forward in the gateway and hung the basket on a wooden pin.

"The same to you, Carlisle!" greeted Wayne with simulated cheerfulness, taking the basket down by its thong. "And you, girl! I knew you wouldn't forget me."

"No, no, father, I couldn't forget you, and I wish this imprisonment were all over. But if you're going to talk a while, take the basket inside first. The food was warm when we left, but it will soon freeze."

"Yes, it'll soon freeze," nodded Wayne somewhat absently, "but I'll take it inside in a moment. I wanted to ask about your hunters, Carlisle. We saw them making in to the post today, and I thought they might have heard some news of my own men from my Indians. Were they in touch with my tribes at all?"

"No," answered Carlisle truthfully enough, "my hunters haven't been in touch with your Indians. They didn't pass any word with them or with the Northwesters' tribes."

"Ah!" sighed Wayne in disappointment. "I didn't know. I thought perhaps they might have. But no matter, I'll send them word that the plague will soon be over and they'll be in shortly with their fur."

"Mason's getting better, then, father?" cried Joan eagerly. "I'm so glad!"

"Better?" echoed Wayne with a gloomy shake of his head. "He died at dark!"

"High heaven!" breathed Carlisle, while Joan clutched his arm with a sob trembling in her throat. "That's hard, Wayne. That's too abominably hard—the last of your five!"

"Condemnation, yes!" exlaimed Wayne, a wave of rebellious despair rising through his gloomy apathy. "Why couldn't the plague have taken some of those treacherous curs who ran away and left me my five true men? By the Doom, Carlisle, I sometimes wonder if there is any——"

"Hush, father, don't say that!" beseeched Joan, divining what was in his mind.

"What about Richelieu?" asked Carlisle by way of diversion. "Is he getting along as well as he was?"

"Yes, he is. There's more irony for you. The wound in his neck is healed, and he's practically over the fever although he complains of weakness in the back and won't move much off his chair. Why couldn't my honest Mason be convalescing in his place, and why couldn't the cursed murderer of Mason and the rest be carried out into the forest tonight?"

"You're going to take them out tonight, then?"

"Yes, Andrews says it should be done at once so as to kill all further risk, and he also says we'll have to take fresh clothes and cleansing baths and then put a torch to

the post. It's impossible to clean it and I can soon rebuild with plenty of logs at hand.

"Yes, they must go out tonight. The other four bodies are in the fur-house. Andrews and I will carry them, of course, but—but could I ask you to make things ready out there, Carlisle?"

"Yes, Wayne, yes—certainly!" agreed Carlisle. "I'll go right over to Cumberland House and get the men. You'll have time to eat your dinner before we're ready."

"Thanks, Carlisle. I haven't much appetite, but I can't refuse what my girl has prepared. And you'd better stay at the post, Joan. You'd better not come into the forest. It'll be no sight for young eyes like yours!"

"Still, I'll come, father!" declared Joan. "I would always regret it if I didn't. I loved them all, just as you did."

"Well, well, whatever you think, girl!" he nodded, turning back into the post. "In about an hour or so!"

THE dance was swinging, the music thrilling, vibrant, lusty, care-free when Carlisle and Joan returned to the trading-room of Cumberland House, but a word to Galt and the shuffling feet stilled, the violins ceased with a whine of protest.

Seizing their outer garments, the men followed the chief trader, many taking torches and axes from the store. Lewis, at Carlisle's request, put his bagpipes under his arm, and all poured out across the snow to the big clearing in the woods where the Winter's fuel had been gathered.

There they set to work under Galt, laying dry branches in layers, each layer crossing at right angles the one beneath as in the end towers of the near-by piles of cordwood. Upon the branches they heaped the cordwood itself, lengths of dry, dead birch and resinous pine, slivery, pitch-soaked, extremely inflammable, bulking hugely high above men's heads.

When the work was nearly finished Joan and Carlisle crossed to the gate of the Free-Trade post to tell Wayne all was ready, but he and Andrews were at that moment coming out of the fur-house doorway which Richelieu held open for them.

The Northwester could see the two at the entrance, but he offered no greeting. Silently he held the door out of the way and shambled up the steps, with an ax handle used as a cane to support his weak limbs; closing the door again when Wayne and Andrews inched forth their pole stretcher with the long, still figure upon it.

"Is he coming, father?" whispered Joan.

"No, thank Heaven!" gritted Wayne. "He says it's too cold and too far for him to walk."

Five times they made the out trip, four times the back trip, before the row of bodies upon the pile of cordwood was complete. Then Carlisle's men touched torches to the bottom branches in many places and stepped back as Andrews began to read the burial service.

The flames mounted and grew, reddening the snow, silhouetting the forest trees, painting the white and Indian faces staring up at the five fever-shattered, pox-pitted, rigescent bodies of men who had been true.

The world turned back a thousand years, and like a pagan crowd of ancients the motley horde of Northmen watched the funeral pyre blaze. Men and women alike thronged about, all of Cumberland House, all of the Cree Tribes, even the old squaws whose mission it was to tend the fires in the bivouacs. The only two souls missing were Richelieu shut up alone in Fort Wayne and Burning Cloud guarding its open gate.

Andrews' "Amen" rang out sonorously. Across the momentary silence that followed trembled the throbbing of the fire, Joan's stifled sobbing, the weird of Lewis' dirge, the wailing death chant of the Cree women, while overhead sounded the solemn harp of the aurora, some unseen Hand pulsating its golden strings!

"Hoo—ah—h—h! Hoo—ah—h—h!" the squaws quavered.

They mourned these true men as they mourned their own dead of the tribes, and their wailing shrilled eerily in the ears of Wayne and Andrews, of Joan and Carlisle, plodding back in pairs toward Fort Wayne.

OF THE four Carlisle was the most mentally alert. His was the first observant glimpse of the Fort Wayne gate, and as he glimpsed it, he gave a startled exclamation and leaped forward in front of the others. No tall dark form showed in sentinel pose in the opening, but prone upon the snow lay the sprawling figure of a man.

"Burning Cloud!" burst out Carlisle as he bent over and examined him. "Stunned with an ax handle. Look—there it is beside him in the snow!"

"By the Doom!" exploded Wayne, rushing up with the rest. "It's Richelieu's work. The shamming skunk! Too cold for him to go into the forest! Too far to walk, eh? Condemnation, he's been biding his time, just waiting his chance, Carlisle, and I've given it to him."

"But where under the dome of heaven does he hope to hide, Paul?" demanded Andrews breathlessly.

Carlisle was reading the signs. He saw where Burning Cloud had been standing upon a drift, the toes of his snow-shoes pointing forestward, no doubt staring at the distant glare of the funeral pyre and listening to the death chant of his people when he was struck down by a blow from behind.

His rifle and snow-shoes were gone, and Carlisle, bent double as he scanned the crust, nosed about like a hound to find the tracks of the shoes striking out from the muddle of prints about the gateway.

They were the long, slim shoes of the Cree runner. There had been no others like them near Fort Wayne that day, and presently Carlisle discovered where they had struck the softer snows in a scent-breaking, fifteen-foot jump out from the packed area about the entrance.

"No weak man's jump, that!" he pointed out to the rest. "And those strides aren't the strides of a weak man, either!"

He indicated the marks of Richelieu's shoes where the Northwester had run upon the tracks he and Joan had made in coming over from Cumberland House. It was plain that Richelieu's purpose had been to confuse trails and throw any tracker off the scent, but Carlisle was never at fault.

He skimmed rapidly ahead, Joan gliding at his side, Wayne and Andrews keeping their distance farther back but equally anxious to see the results of the trailing.

The tracks led straight toward the Cree bivouacs, toward the snow-walled quadrangles glowing pink under the blazing fires within.

"He's hiding in the teepees somewhere, Joan," breathed Carlisle, "waiting till the woods are clear. You'd better drop back. He's armed, and he'll likely shoot on sight."

Then Carlisle's shoes struck the snow-banked side of the end quadrangle, sending the flakes hissing into the fire, and instantaneously the truth struck home to him. There had not been a hunter or a squaw in the whole camp to menace or alarm a pillager.

Soaring Eagle's dogs, the splendid one-hundred-and-fifty-pound Hudson's Bays, the swiftest dogs in Carlisle's district, the animals no other post team could pretend to overtake, were gone from their former place by the fire.

Soaring Eagle's up-ended cariole, too, was gone, and yonder was the white furrow of it streaking off in the direction that led up the Saskatchewan.

"Escaped!" breathed Joan. "But be careful, Paul. Maybe he has spread the plague here as he tried to do once before!"

"No, thank Heaven, his tracks don't go any farther than this fire. He hadn't time to enter the main bivouac, you see, Joan. It took him all his time to get the harness on those five big brutes and get away. He has barely done it, for the cariole furrow hasn't yet hardened in the frost!"

CHAPTER XII

THE SORCERY OF SPRING

WINTER'S waning they sensed first in the flutter of ptarmigan flocks back from the Takipi Hills, in the drift of the phantom caribou herds down from the Barren Lands, in the lengthening days, the receding horizon which drew away into infinite remoteness, the rampant winds which snow-smoked that far horizon but died in a strange vacuum over the bosom of Pine Island Lake itself.

All about Cumberland House the Northern world burned incandescent, lurid, shot through and through, earth, air and sky, with weird shafts of color. The snows were billowy seas of coral with the bloody sunsets lying on them like islands of rubies.

The atmosphere was a mystic veil, today a shower of diamond dust, tomorrow a silver vapor, the next day the gossamer cloak of a sleeping glacier chrysoberyl-stained upon a web of hoar frost. And sheer from the dome of heaven to the line of the snows banked the deep purple clouds, like regal hangings in an ancient temple with the mock suns peering through as eyes of the priests of the sacrifice were wont to peer.

Yet there came no vernal transition, no slow travail of nature bringing forth new life. Only the purple tapestries and the peering eyes dissolved one day, and in their place floated turquoise skies and cirrous

clouds painted with the eeriest sight Northern eyes may see.

Joan was the first to notice, straying to the door of the Factor's house while her father, Andrews and Carlisle talked and smoked the bright evening away before the fireplace in the council room.

Now the sun set late. Jealous daylight claimed many hours of the former dark, and upon this evening the low sun was screened behind a fan of ground fog shooting up a half-circle of crimson spokes rimmed by a golden felloe. Yet it was not the fantastic sunset but the weird sky itself that called forth Joan's excited cry and brought the others to her side.

"Look!" she murmured in a tone of awe. "Did you ever see such unnatural beauty?"

"By heavens, a mirage!" exclaimed Carlisle. "A mirage of the South!"

For before their uplifted eyes, as if it lay out yonder upon the bare snows or just over the needle-tufted pines, stretched the open waters of the Great Lakes and the verdant land to the southward. What a charm of color, what a mellow sweep of warmth they beheld!

Chrysoprase green the waters shimmered, frothed with the crests of the surges, edged with the pearly foam of pounded beaches, while afar spread the silver ribbons of rivers, the fat, grassed fields, the groves of leafed trees, the acres of orchard bloom. Almost could they hear the cries of children at play under the showering petals, catch the drone of the hived bees, feel the hot-lipped Southern winds kissing their faces like the passionate caress of their own febrile Chinook.

"It's Spring!" declared Carlisle. "It's blossomy Spring down there."

"Yes, it's Spring on the Wyoming Valley —see!" urged Wayne, his fawn-green eyes burning raptly, his abnormally long arm pointing out his homeland in the sky picture as one would lay a finger upon an unrolled map. "It's Spring, and it's a sign. By the Doom, a sign that I'm going back!"

Carlisle and Andrews were silent.

The tears flooded to Joan's eyes.

They all stared mutely while the mirage faded as quickly as it had appeared and somber clouds slipped over with the motion of a hand wiping away the drawing from a slate.

Wayne's eye went dark with the sky. He groped for the doorway as they turned inside and sat down in his chair before the fireplace, his head in his hands, gazing into the glowing embers as one who sees old scenes in pageant.

Within an hour the rain came, the warm, steaming, smiting rain that had lurked for weeks in the purple cloud banks, and all night it poured, gushed, fell in torrents, sweeping the snows like a magic broom, brimming ice-bound lake and river with the leaping waters of life.

Companioning it, came the Chinook, stealing a march in the dark, ravishing the naked woods, stirring the pulse primordial in the heart of the waking earth.

Morning revealed a world aflood, the ice jams flying, the Saskatchewan in rampage, hurling the glut of a thousand streams down to Lake Winnipeg. Spring! It burst like prison doors for prisoners long confined. It came like a swift reprieve to mourners of one doomed. Spring! The air was one vast flyway of wildfowl winging north.

As rivers run to the sea, as men seek their own hearth fires, so these whizzing wedges returned to the nests that fledged them, the ducks to their million marshes, the Canada geese to their Hudson's Bay shores, the wavies to their nameless Arctic islands.

While the ice runs reeled along, the willows budded beside them. While the muskegs shed their frozen skins, the wild rose clothed their starkness. While the melting snows uncarpeted the forest floor, the nymph-like flowers spread over it their rugs of matchless hue. Spring! The incomparable thrill and verve and urge of it! It surged in all living things from the human occupants of Cumberland House to the singing bluebirds in the tree tops and the whining mosquitoes in the swamp.

THE breaking of the forest trails meant the cutting off of all communication in the Northland till the floods had subsided sufficiently for the frail canoes to breast them. Carlisle had had no word from James Bay. If word had not been sent out by trippers before the snows broke, it might not arrive in time to let him know the situation in the other districts. The lack of such knowledge was a severe handicap.

The governor always kept his promises strictly, and he wondered what had happened to prevent a message getting through. But even while he worried, a lone Indian canoeman, daring the running ice, drove

up the Saskatchewan over the lessening flood and threw a dispatch bag upon Carlisle's desk.

"You are Flaming Torch from the bay post of York Factory," identified Carlisle, scanning him keenly, "but you have not come from the bay by canoe. I know that."

"No," explained Flaming Torch, "I came by dog-team. The trail was slow with the melting snows, and the floods caught me at the Pas. I had to wait for the ice to run. Then I came on with a canoe from the post."

"Stay here," Carlisle directed him. "I may have a message to send back right away."

He knew Wayne and Andrews were out somewhere along the swollen river, so he took the dispatches over to his house to have privacy while reading them, but when he opened the council room door Joan sat there.

"What is it, Paul?" she asked, looking up from the book she was reading.

"Dispatches," he replied with satisfaction. "I've looked for them a long time. Don't let me disturb you, though. Go on with your reading. I'll just glance over them and get the news."

Most of them were documents of the ordinary post routine, things that would come under the jurisdiction and execution of Galt and his clerks, but finally he came to one of greater import.

The sweeping chirography he recognized as the governor's own handwriting, and it was addressed: Chief District Factor Carlisle, Cumberland House, Cumberland District, via Norway House. Also it was marked *Important*, and Carlisle tore it open with eager hands. It was written in conversational style, and the body of it ran:

All the Upper Country is a hell of smallpox! Between that and trade war, all of the Free-Trade and the majority of the Northwest posts are wiped out. As far as the latest dispatches by runners point out, the Northwest posts of James and Roderick McKenzie, McLeod, McDougall, Todd, McGillivray and Sager are the only ones left. These posts are very strong, as many of the other posts evacuated and fell in on them.

I have temporarily closed all our posts in the infected districts and freighted out the fur by the Churchill River, using dog teams for the purpose before the river broke. The Northwesters have made no move, and beyond a doubt the McKenzies and the rest will try to come down the Saskatchewan as usual in the Spring.

You must stop them. They must not go through. I hope you are strong enough as you stand and have escaped the plague. If not, I can perhaps get you reinforcements up in time. Everything here on the bay is much the same. The past Winter has been a severe one, and it may be I shall not endure another. My health is failing greatly, and I think I may ask for a change in the Spring. Let me know your prospects by the runner who carries this!"

As Carlisle raised his eyes from his reading he caught the gaze of Joan bent upon him across the table.

"What is the news, Paul?" she asked earnestly. "Is it betraying confidences or trade secrets to tell me?"

"No, Joan, there's nothing in it you shouldn't know about," he assured her, handing the dispatch over the board. "You may read it for yourself. I'm sorry it confirms our worst news about your father's posts. Soaring Eagle's words were true. They're all gone, it seems. The Northwesters fared somewhat better."

Joan quickly read the dispatch, and Carlisle saw the soft gleam of commiseration spring into her eyes.

"I was afraid—so dreadfully afraid!" she exclaimed. "Now I know. I know what I haven't the heart to tell him. But it doesn't make any mention of Richelieu, Paul. Do you think he'll have reached any of these posts that remain unaffected?"

"He has certainly reached one of them," Carlisle emphatically declared. "He had the very best of dogs, and it wouldn't take him long to reach, say, Todd's post."

"Then perhaps he'll warn them not to come down the Saskatchewan. Perhaps they'll try some other ruse or else hold their furs over for another year."

Carlisle shook his head.

"They won't do that," he prophesied. "Furs held over are not so profitable as if marketed at once. Then, they have to go to Grande Portage for next year's supplies. Besides, Richelieu is a bully and a fighter, no coward whatever. Nobody need warn him off, and he won't warn anybody else off.

"Even if any of the other partners object and want to play a safer game, he'll smash their objections. I know Simon Richelieu. He'll come, and he'll have all the Northwest brigades under his command. Further than that, Joan, don't you realize how much depends on my scattering his brigades here? If I should lose——"

"Don't, Paul, don't mention that possibility!" cried Joan.

She was half out of her chair, her face all flushed, leaning over the table toward him, her hands planted on the litter of dispatches.

"Don't mention it, please! It would bring misfortune, I'm sure. I've learned to be superstitious in this North, you see. Yes, I was a fool to say he wouldn't come. He will come. And Paul, Paul—you must not lose!"

Carlisle's fingers closed on hers, outspread upon the papers.

"By the God of Northmen, Joan," he vowed, "I will not lose!"

The magnetic pressure of his hands told more than the mere words. Joan with a radiant smile slowly withdrew her hands and dropped back into her chair, still following his movements with her eyes as he set about writing the answer to the governor's despatch.

WHEN he had finished he looked up.

"Would you like to read it, Joan?" he asked.

"Yes, I would like to, Paul," she confessed, "that is, if it is the same as the other—if it is proper that I should read it."

"It's all right for you to see it, girl. Here!"

Joan took the paper and read:

I have your dispatch via Norway House, although it was somewhat delayed en route. The break-up of the river caught the courier at the Pas, and he had to lie up with the dogs and come on at the first opportunity by canoe. This circumstance would have made it a question whether reinforcements could have reached here in time had I needed them, but luckily I do not.

Besides my own men, Galt's strong following which was here when I arrived, and the crews of the two fleets of York boats whom I have retained, I am drawing in all the forces of the other posts with all the Indians of those sections. The Indians are loyal and numerous, and thus I shall have a preponderance of men. As regards the smallpox, it has been here. In fact, it started here in a manner I shall explain when I reach James Bay.

Both Northwesters and Free-Traders fled from it, burning Richelieu's post as they fled, except Richelieu, Wayne and five of Wayne's men. In isolation at Fort Wayne the five Free-Traders died with it, Richelieu recovering and managing to escape up the Saskatchewan. Fort Wayne we fired so as to leave no possibility of the disease spreading here.

I have given Wayne quarters at Cumberland House, although we thought it best not to tell him the extent of his losses yet, he is such a strange and moody man. There has been no infection at Cumberland House. Everything is in the usual shape, and fur has been plentiful. I shall stop the Northwest brigades here and then go down to Grande Portage.

The Northwesters have claimed the ground there and closed the Portage and thus the Pigeon River route to any but their own voyageurs. I myself had to make a dash up the Kaministiquia coming in. You can understand that it is supremely in our interests to contest that claim without delay, before undisputed closing of it gives them excuse for holding it under a ruling of the corrupt Montreal courts.

So I shall pass over the ground to void the claim and come home to the bay via the Michipicoten, the Missinabie and the Moose. I am sorry to hear you have been troubled in health but trust to find you much improved when next I pay my respects.

"Well, Joan?" he questioned when she looked up with the light of surprise upon her face.

"You are going down to Grande Portage, Paul? I thought you would go down to James Bay by the Hayes River?"

"No," he responded, "if I stopped Richelieu's brigades here and then went down the Hayes, my work would be only half done. I am going to open up Grande Portage, and by the God of Northmen, Joan, you are going with me!"

That day the courier Flaming Torch departed down the river. The next day the men of the other posts came up, Lewis from the Pas, Lea from the Nepowin, Garry from Moose Lake, Hampton from Chimawawin, Jarvis from Grand Rapids.

They brought all the Indians of their sections to add to Carlisle's strength, and Jarvis, his Cockney nose tilted skyward in pride, drove up with his own crew the Factor's great craft which had been left at Grand Rapids when the river froze.

"See the bloomin' Rajah ride!" he grinned doffing his cap to the crowd on shore. "Some d'y I'll command one of my own. Just mark wot I s'y."

He had with him Soaring Eagle's tribe, the up-Saskatchewan Indians who had elected to hunt about Lake Winnipeg when driven out by the plague, laden with a fresh catch of fur. The fur went in in trade, and these were the busy hours, hours filled with life and movement, sound and color after the ghostly desolation and silence of the Winter.

Never an hour went by, day or night, but some new fleet of canoes touched prows upon the Pine Island Lake shore, some new family pitched camp and swelled the teepee city 'round about Cumberland House.

Out of the eastern and western arms they came, off the Sturgeon and the Carrot Rivers, from Lakes Namew, Amisk, Goose,

Athapuscow, foregathering after custom immemorial, spiraling the blazing skies with their camp smokes, filling the balmy air with liquid language that lisped like the moist Spring wind or gurgled like the waters.

They were all in, every man upon the trade books, every Hudson's Bay hunter in the district with their squaws, papooses, dogs and household gods. The only outpost remaining was Wells' camp on the Seepanock Channel.

Wells' men Carlisle had not drawn in like the others. On the contrary he had added to the Seepanock Channel force, bidding Wells redouble his vigilance with the opening of the stream and giving him explicit orders as to what course he must pursue when the Northwesters came down.

Nor was the significance of these preparations lost upon Wayne. They marked, as it were, the breaking of the truce enforced between him and Carlisle by the smallpox outbreak. They loomed upon his conception as a final menace to his interests and he became morose, moody, brooding over Carlisle's actions and his ancient wrongs, watching for the Free-Trading brigades he hoped to see come driving down the Saskatchewan and grimly waiting for that moment when there would be no further truce and he and Carlisle must decisively settle accounts.

THE ice run was practically past. Vagrant floes spun by on the turgid waters, but their very solitary journeying told Carlisle that the mighty highway was open. Even back to the tiniest feeders in the foothills of the Rockies the way was clear, and the Northwesters were doubtless driving down. They might come by daylight or dark, today, tomorrow, there was no telling, but it was well to be prepared.

Carlisle went up to the Seepanock Channel and personally posted Wells' men, both in the hills across the Saskatchewan and in the low scrub round the channel opening itself. A mile inland the channel had been heavily barricaded as a necessary precaution, but no evidence of Hudson's Bay forces being in possession was visible from the main stream.

"Keep out of sight," Carlisle adjured Wells. "Don't let them get a glimpse of any of your men. If they enter the channel, rush and hold them till I can get up the river to help you. If they go by, make sure that it is not a ruse and then follow them on to me as fast as you can."

"Yez, Factor," Wells assured him, "I zhall make zertain o' that. You zhall zee!"

Carlisle dropped down-stream again below the muddle of straggling islands, below the scramble of rapids, below the twisted knot of river bends known as the Coiled Snakes to a spit where the Saskatchewan narrowed not a great distance from Cumberland House.

Here the park lands met the ruder forest in a series of rolling bluffs and low plateaus, a bold promontory crowding the river into a twisted, somber chasm. Close by the rim of the chasm and up on the slopes shouldered the jostling spruce, and against these high trees Carlisle sent his men with their axes.

To the swinging steel the spruce trees swung and snapped, plunging like the thrown spears of Titans into the river beneath. They criss-crossed and lodged and jammed, piling trunk on trunk, seineing the vagrant floes that drifted down, forming a stubborn wall against the angry roaring river.

The dammed flood rose a foot, two feet, three feet, but the matted barrier held, while high above Carlisle and his axmen rained down the trunks till the sullen tide, backed 'round the face of the promontory and gave up the fight. Beaten, it slunk out the easier way, over the bank through the Devil's Elbow, a broad, barren valley that seemed to have been an ancient beaver meadow.

Owing to the width of the valley the yellow flood flowed no deeper than a man's waist, sweeping in a majestic curve of three miles or more back to the well-nigh drained Saskatchewan's bed. As the waters rolled ruminatively through, they raised something inch by inch upon their rippling surface, a dark line across the molten gold, a triple boom of logs securely roped to giant pines on either benchland.

Ralph Wayne heard the axes ringing, saw the Saskatchewan temporarily draining, and ran out to where Carlisle was at work. He glimpsed the dammed chasm, the boom of logs across the Devil's Elbow, and his fawn-green eyes blazed with their old inimical light into Carlisle's.

"Condemnation! You close the Saskatchewan, Carlisle?" he exploded.

"So it seems, Wayne," returned Carlisle quietly.

"To my brigades?"

"No, to the Northwest brigades."

"But what's the difference? You close the waterway, and you stop all who travel down. By the Doom, do you think I will stand and by and see it done?"

Carlisle's gray eyes looked steadily into Wayne's blazing ones where he stood upon the end of the boom, and as he gazed, the Factor seemed to see back into those far-gone years which had molded the man so harshly.

With strange occult vision he saw the pall of smoke and the sweep of pillage through the Wyoming Valley and Wayne's long pilgrimage into the North with his child of four. He sensed the vision and dream that had lured Wayne in his loneliness to do what many another adventurer had failed to do, to blaze the trail of empire beyond the Missouri.

Carlisle saw, felt the greatness of Wayne's dissolving dream, and there was no emnity in his heart, nothing but regret and pity, and he laid an earnest hand on the Free-Trader's arm.

"On my honor, Wayne, this move has nothing to do with you!" he assured him.

"You won't try to hold my brigades, then?" flashed the incredulous Wayne. "You'll let them pass around when they come?"

Carlisle hesitated, then nodded helplessly.

"If—if they come," he evaded, "I'll put out no hand to stop them."

"If!" blurted Wayne. "What in creation have you up your sleeve? Do you think my men aren't as loyal as yours? Just because some of the drunken curs joined in the rout like sheep when they got the smallpox scare, you needn't class them all as that. Look at Mason. Look at Murdock, and the rest. Had you ever truer men under your red flag?"

"No, none truer than those," admitted Carlisle. "None truer in all the world for that matter!"

Wayne shrugged his shoulders darkly as he turned away again.

"Then that settles it," he growled. "They'll come all right, and when they take passage through here, they take it for all time, Carlisle. Either that or——"

He finished his sentence with a shake of his head that was more sinister than any spoken threat.

Gravely, without answering his threat, Carlisle watched him striding back to the post before he turned to give final directions to his men. Some dozen he appointed to work in two shifts, walking the triple boom with poles in their hands deflecting the drifting ice so that it would squeeze under and leave the barrier clear.

The rest he split into two camps to bivouac upon the benchlands at either end of the boom, ready at the coming of the sleepless scouts he had posted here and there all the way up-river to the Seepanock Channel. There was nothing more to be done but wait. The long twilight of the Northern evening had crept in upon the completion of the day's work, and through the dusk Carlisle followed in Wayne's footsteps back to Cumberland House.

IN THE deepest dark before the dawn Wells' scout Spotted Deer, a Cree Indian of tremendous endurance and skill, fell in upon him, breathless and sweating.

"They come," he grunted in Cree, spent with his running. "Many canoes. Many voices of white men, the French Company's men singing to their paddles."

Instantly Wells struck fire with his flint and steel to the dry birchbark, heaped beside him on the hillside, and blew it into flame.

The flare was hidden by the bulge of the hill from any one up-river, but could be readily seen by an appointed eye in an appointed place down-river. As Wells strained his eyes into the dark, he caught the answering flare a mile or two below, a bright flame and unmistakable but no larger than a handful of fireflies held on high by a sportive boy.

Immediately Wells smothered his flame with earth, and far down he saw the second flare go out and knew that his message was speeding swifter than the swiftest bird.

All the way along the Saskatchewan from island to island, from headland to headland, from hill to hill the red eyes glowed and winked out in the dark, and the last one glared for Waseyawin stationed upon the steep benchland above the Hudson's Bay men's bivouacs. Swiftly Waseyawin lit his torch and waved it in answer. The far spark died in the gloom. He dashed the torch into the soft muck and bounded down the hillside.

"The men of Black-beard are coming," he cried to the drowsy camp. "The sign of the fire flashed through the night to me. They will be here with the winged dawn. I, Waseyawin, have spoke it. Ae, and I go to tell the Factor."

Like wraiths the Hudson's Bay men arose from wherever they lay, from bough beds on the ground, from the canopy of the bushes, from the tents spread in desperation to keep off the plague of mosquitoes.

They stepped forth shadowy, vague, thronging like ghosts in the dark that would soon break to show the stern, bronzed faces of Northmen sculptured by the chisel of daring. Among them the chief trader Galt moved his heavily-built body, ordering, directing, posting them in their allotted positions.

"Go across the valley, Eugene," he begged Drummond, "and let them know what we know. It is good to be ready when the Factor comes."

Amid the low, musical, night-roar of the waters flowing under the boom and the spaced thud of ice cakes smiting the logs, Drummond's moccasins pat-patted across on the wet bark. He gave the word to the polers as he passed, and in a few minutes more ghostly forms were thronging in the bivouac at the other end of the boom.

Waseyawin waited for none of these things. He ran as the deer run, the tang of the dank night air and the smell of the young earth throbbing in his nostrils and setting his primitive blood a-leap, making straight for Cumberland House.

Up the trampled shore he sped and through the sleeping city of teepees, setting the curs to howling and stirring the tribes from their dreaming of forest dreams. They cried out to him to know if he was Maunobosho or Nenaubosho stalking through the night, but he heeded them not.

Through the open gate of the palisades he darted and across the dark stockade ground. He knew there was no use in going to the Factor's house, for he had seen that only Wayne, his daughter and Father Andrews were sleeping there. The Factor's bed was in the trading-room, and, dispensing with all custom in the urgency of the moment, Waseyawin sprang up the steps and opened the door.

Carlisle lay upon the temporary bed behind his desk, sunk in a deep sleep after the long day's toil. He did not hear the almost soundless feet of his bowsman, did not wake till he felt the Indian fingers laid softly and respectfully upon his cheek.

"*Koos koos kwa*, Factor!" cried Waseyawin. "Wake up! The eyes of fire winked through the dark to me, and after the eyes will the sun flash upon the paddles of the men of the French Company."

"It is well, Waseyawin," spoke Carlisle in Cree, mentally alert the moment he was awake. "Go among your people in their teepees and gather the hunters. Take them with you to the Devil's Elbow to strengthen my men. I will not be far behind you."

CHAPTER XIII

A SKIN FOR A SKIN

MAKING ready his weapons as he went, Carlisle ran forth from the trading-room. The stars were gone as he glanced upward. The sky was graying, and above the eastern forest-line the lemon forelights of the dawn were gleaming.

Outside the stockade the Indian teepees buzzed like a vast colony of bees. Waseyawin had already hurried the hunters away, but their womenkind were hissing the news of impending trouble about and scurrying off to the slope above the Devil's Elbow where they might see their lords give battle. Carlisle's swift feet passed many of them on the way, and as he came to the steep of the benchland, the vivid picture of the valley below spread sharp and clear before his eyes.

Through the great gut of greening hills, along their scarred earth faces, rocky outcrops and scrubby slopes rolled the slumbrous sheet of golden-colored water. Its vagrant floes had found the gouged earth an easy place to lodge, and there shimmering acres of ice were stranded, ghostly white in the growing light. Above hung the furry buds and opened leaves of the willows, the lacy, climbing birches and over all the regal, scornful spruce pricking stiffly into the lemon sky.

Clusters of tents marked the ends of the boom, drawn like a black triple cable across the golden flood and fretting it into a snarling line of foam where the flow plunged under. 'Round the tents and scattered across the long boom he marked his waiting forces, all the swarthy hunters Waseyawin had marshaled, all the Hudson's Bay white men, half-breeds and resident Indians

of Cumberland House and the other district posts.

Yonder was Waseyawin himself, moving on the boom with the snaky slouch of the Crees, Missowa the Ojibway standing tall, strong, straight as a lance.

There were all the rest of his officers posed on the logs, their physical characteristics infallibly betraying their identities even at that distance—Galt's stocky body, Drummond's eagle profile and raven hair, Lewis' hoary head, Lea's slim Highland figure, Jarvis' nervous shuffle, Hampton's fleshy bulk, Garry's squat limbs and flaming red beard.

Even as he looked, Carlisle saw Eugene point up the majestic curve of the Devil's Elbow, saw the hands of the row of men on the boom drop to their hips and belts and curl up under their armpits for the handy weapons. There was something coming on the rolling flood. The output of the pines across the shoulder of the slope shut out his own view of the curve, but Carlisle knew that Eugene and the rest had sighted their enemies.

In long, slipping, coasting strides he slid down the benchland upon his wet moccasins and ran out on the boom beside his brigade leader.

"Ba gar, here dey be come!" shrilled Eugene, still pointing, and Carlisle sighted over his hand to glimpse the Northwest brigades sweeping 'round the promontory.

The jam of trees and ice in the narrow chasm was not the first jam they had avoided in their long journey down that roaring waterway. They followed the Saskatchewan wherever it went, and in the natural diversion of things they came driving over the broad, unobstructed yellow flood that eddied 'round the Devil's Elbow.

BLACK as Stygian craft the canoes loomed in the shadow of the headland, but as they passed the headland the first sapphire shafts of the dawnlight struck them, glinting from the canoe sides, flashing from the dipping paddles, paradoxically investing the white and Indian faces with nebulous, pearly haloes.

In the sudden blaze of light Carlisle recognized the faces, the men of every craft, James and Roderick McKenzie, McLeod and McDougall with their Athabasca brigades, Todd from Fort des Prairies, McGillivray and Sager from Fond du Lac. The governor's information had been accurate. Not a man he had named was missing.

Todd's canoe was in front, and as it approached the boom, Carlisle saw a man rise to his feet and plant a flagstaff in the curving bow.

The banner of the Northwesters broke on the morning wind, and behind its rippling folds he beheld Richelieu, stiff as a ramrod in the swaying craft, resplendent in his uniform of a colonel, his grinning black-bearded face hideously pox-pitted, more like the face of the devil than ever!

"Long live the Northwest Company!" he cried, and like an echo his forces took up the Northwest watchcry: "Fortitude in distress!" their cheering drowning the roaring of the river.

Carlisle stooped to pick up a spike-ended shaft that lay at his feet on the boom. With a strong darting thrust he drove the spike into the logs, and the shaft oscillated there, shaking out the blood-red emblem of the Hudson's Bay Company and Carlisle's own streaming gonfalon, the gonfalon that had come undimmed through fire and flood, through famine and plague, through all the hazards of the Northland.

"*Pro Belle Cutem!*" he shouted antagonistically, and the bellow of the Hudson's Bay giants set the high hill-tops quaking.

"Long live the Northwest Company!"

"A skin for a skin!" they boomed in a diapason of terrible strength. "Long live the H. B. C.!"

"By the Doom, yes, and to perdition with Richelieu and his cursed Northwesters!" shrilled a wild voice ashore.

Carlisle glanced over his shoulder to see the tall form of Wayne dashing out upon the boom and behind him Joan, her pale face paler with excitement, her spun-gold hair flying in the breeze, calling him back in vain. Behind Joan ran Andrews, holding the skirts of his cassock, his mosquito-veil flapping over his face at every stride.

Wayne impetuously zigzagged through the line of men to Carlisle's side. His mahogany countenance was ridged with anger, his fawn-green eyes sparking wickedly.

"Condemnation, Carlisle," he burst out, "yesterday I never dreamed I would fight under your flag! Today what is left for me to do? Look at my brigade leaders yonder, one, two—six of them from the

Upper Country posts," pointing them out with rapid stabs of his rifle muzzle, "speckled through Richelieu's crew like the pits in his face! And when my brigade leaders paddle in his pay, Carlisle, I ask you where in creation are my brigades?"

"Sleeping under the green ferns, Ralph," Richelieu answered swiftly before Carlisle could speak.

"You cursed slime! Who put them there?" flashed Wayne.

Richelieu stiffly shrugged his military shoulders.

"*Diablement*, do I control the elements and the plagues? The Red Death raged, and the Red Death took whom it wished. *Voila!* It is the will of God. But my quarrel is not with you, Ralph Wayne. *Non*, nor with Mademoiselle Joan. I will have a word to your profit with both of you when I have finished with this *cannaille* Carlisle, broken his barrier and razed his post to the ground."

Wayne half-lifted his rifle stock to his cheek.

"By the Doom—will you have a word with us?"

Carlisle pressed Wayne's rifle barrel down.

"This is my business, Wayne," he warned the Free-Trader. "Keep your weapons still. Get Joan back to the shore end yonder. She may be carried into the water if they try a rush."

Carlisle half-turned to enforce his request on Wayne, for the instant lessening his vigilance, and in that moment of unwariness Richelieu thought to seize the advantage.

"*Hola!*" he shouted loudly to his brigades. "Form the line!"

LIKE lightning the paddles urged, the hindmost canoes drawing up on a level with the foremost, edging in, bellying sidewise, jockeying like race-horses at the barrier, forming an unbroken line from shore to shore. All in a second they executed the maneuver with two or three darting paddle-flips, and as the prows evened and still glided in swift motion, Richelieu waved them forward.

"Charge!" he ordered and hurled them on with a violent gesture of his arm as if they had been a squadron in action.

Like charging cavalry the canoes leaped ahead, like immense horses carrying many riders, the foam streaking from their noses, the spray spattering behind them, Richelieu towering in the bow of Todd's craft as on the neck of a charger, leading them recklessly like the fearless soldier he was and whipping them to frenzy with the stinging lash of his tongue.

Straight at the boom they reared, but Carlisle sensed their trick. A canoe's length away, the whole array would swerve broadside on and spill the Northwesters out on the boom with momentum enough to carry all before them and sweep the Hudson's Bay forces into the water.

Richelieu was shrewd enough not to mass his attack in one spot but to batter the whole boom simultaneously. His force was almost equal to Carlisle's and he knew that the swift rush of the canoes would dash his men upon the boom with a smashing impact that no merely stationary force could withstand. It would be like a single line of infantry before galloping horsemen, overridden, crushed, shattered by sheer impetus.

He knew that Carlisle knew it too, and he passed a quick order along the line.

"Shoot once!" he commanded. "Then jump for their canoes before they reach the boom!"

Yelling demoniacally, the Northwesters were driving in, only a few yards distant. Todd's canoe was surging fairly for Carlisle, Richelieu still upright in the bow, the flapping folds of the flag partly hiding his body but the ugly black-bearded face showing clear above, his mocking eyes gleaming over the barrel of the pistol he held in his hand.

"*Par Dieu*, Carlisle," he grinned. "It is the end for you, the end of everything, the end of your strife, your Company, your dream of mademoiselle!"

Carlisle did not trouble to answer. His own pistol in his hand, he waited, his eyes never shifting from Richelieu, his body slightly bent forward from the hips, his moccasined feet gripping the wet bark of the logs.

When the canoes were still two paddle-strokes away he saw the muzzle of Richelieu's pistol flip upward, caught the puff of smoke, heard the weapon's bark, felt the wind of the silent lead through his hair and its burning groove along his scalp.

Straight into the black-bearded face he fired, but the swaying flagstaff snapped, while Richelieu still grinned there, mockingly, sardonically, sighting his pistol afresh

in the rocking craft. But before either he or Carlisle could shoot again, Wayne's long-barreled rifle spat from the boom.

Faint as a squib it went off at Carlisle's ear in concert with the Hudson's Bay men's volley, but the effect was contrastingly violent. Richelieu, his weapon dropping with a splash, whirled halfway 'round as if spun by an invisible hand. Todd's canoe was just in the act of turning a broadside on to the boom, and the jerk catapulted the staggering Richelieu out of the swerving canoe bow.

He landed limply, half in the water, half on the boom. Carlisle had a momentary glance of Andrews dragging his body out on the logs, of Wayne jamming in another charge, of the white-faced Joan beside him as he leaped from the boom before Todd's canoe could touch it.

All along the line the others leaped with him, and they landed with a wallowing splash close under the Northwesters' whirling canoes. The Hudson's Bay men knew the depth of the water, a knowledge that their enemies lacked, and therein lay their advantage and Carlisle's strategy. The total unexpectedness of the move lent it all the greater force, and the number of Carlisle's officers distributed throughout the line ensured perfect unison of effort.

Galt, Drummond, Lewis, Jarvis, Hampton, Garry, Lea, Missowa and Waseyawin and the lesser clerks were personally responsible for the men under their command, and they saw to it that all moved in concert.

Thus it was an unbroken row of men that barred an unbroken row of canoes, before the occupants of the canoes could jump from craft to boom, and seized their low-sunk gunwales. The clear-headed Todd smelled disaster the moment the Hudson's Bay men launched through the air.

"Hades! Look out!" he yelled to the other partners. "Back-water, all!"

But Carlisle was too swift for him. A whirl of the Factor's hands and Todd's canoe was upside down, the fur packs on the bottom, Todd and his crew floundering in the water.

Todd came up sputtering and cursing. His rifle-butt smashed down on Carlisle's shoulder, but Carlisle skimmed the surface with a fist blow that caught Todd upon the chin and stretched him limp and floating. Scattering the Indian crew, he lunged on to overturn the nearest craft.

Nor had his men been idle! Everywhere he looked he saw the Northwest canoes either capsized or in the act of being capsized by his men. Up to their waists, sometimes to their armpits in the icy water they offered small targets for Northwest violence while the canoes were easy prey.

Often top-heavy with crews and packs of fur, always hair-poised on their keelless bottoms, the birch-barks went over at the touch of a hand, the poke of a knee or the solid push of a gun-butt.

IT WAS a weird sight to behold, whole brigades suddenly turning turtle, heeling on their gunwales, rearing up on their sterns, spilling and sprawling arms, gear, men and furs in all directions.

Some of the Hudson's Bay men in their savage zeal paused not for the laying on of hands but struck through the birch-bark skins of the canoes with knives and belt axes, scuttling the crafts at a stroke, sending the paddlers under like mannikins in a biscuit-box.

Bitter was the amphibious battle through which Carlisle rampaged. Though they had lost their canoes, the Northwesters found their footing and resisted tenaciously. Many of their arms were sunk in the plunge, more they saved were plugged with mud and slime so that there was little shooting.

They fought as their forefathers fought, with knife and club and knotted fist, a primitive horde battling like cavemen in the wilderness, raging in the churned, moiled river between steep benchlands under the blazing sun.

High on those benchlands clustered the womenkind of the tribes in action, all gay-clothed in their calicoes, bright-cowled in their warm-colored shawls, the squaws, the boys, the maidens, the moss-bagged papooses, even the husky dogs of the camp snarling and clipping their fangs over the conflict in the water below.

In that wild moment the women far forgot their race stoicism and shrilled encouragement to their hunters, waved their gaudy silk handkerchiefs, beseeching their Good Spirit to help the Hudson's Bay, calling on their Evil One to blast the bold Northwesters.

The hunters answered their cries with strident yells, their wet, swarthy arms glistening like bronze in the sunlight as, led

by Missowa and Waseyawin, they carried the fight more fiercely to their foes. The Northwesters were beaten back from the boom they hoped to break. Carlisle at the head of his men seized McLeod and bodily hurled him out on the farther shore.

"Get the partners!" he shouted above the crazy din. "Smash the other partners and the whole crowd will break!"

"Are ye no seein' I ha' got ane?" rumbled Lewis, sloshing in the water like a hippopotamus.

He had a neck-hold on McGillivray, and even though Sager leaped upon his back he staggered out to the shallows, cast McGillivray into the saskatoon bushes like a discarded sack and tore Sager off as a man would pluck a climbing cat.

"Ane an' twa!" he amended. "Where are yon ithers?"

"Ba gar, here—dese two!" chuckled Drummond as he and Galt backed the McKenzies out on to the stranded ice-cakes with their hammering gun-butts.

Jarvis was smiting McDougall with his fists, fighting as he had fought many a London street fight in the years that were gone. He struck the Northwester at will upon the face and neck, all that showed above the rippling surface, but without warning McDougall drove his knee under water into Jarvis' stomach and Jarvis staggered violently back against the boom.

McDougall turned and madly splashed ashore, while Jarvis gazed after him with a surprise and agony on his Cockney face.

"Stryke me blind in the blinkers! That's a foul, I s'y!" he gasped and promptly collapsed across the logs.

Up-river a tremendous shout burst out. Carlisle wheeled waist-deep, and a triumphant laugh broke from him.

"Wells is coming!" he encouraged his men. "Now, all together! Give them blue perdition!"

Wells' fleet was swinging 'round the Devil's Elbow at a dizzy speed, the canoes boring forward in long jumps, throwing the water aside in rolling ridges, the paddles making the surface boil. They cheered as they came, all the loud-throated men of the Seepanock Channel, all the river scouts he had picked up on his way down.

"Skin for skin!" they roared to their battling fellows, and immersed warriors found breath to answer back.

"Long live the H. B. C.!"

Fresh and strong and numerous Wells' force struck the Northwesters in the back, and under the pressure of his advance they scattered for the shore like a herd of caribou to join their beaten leaders. Heading the rout, Carlisle saw a bedraggled figure he recognized, the hawk-nosed Dentaire with his mustaches plastered over his cheeks.

"By Jove, there he is!" Carlisle cried. "Look, Eugene. Look, Galt. Dentaire—you remember? Did you ever know the like of that? Ready to die of fear of smallpox and never got it!"

Dentaire heard Carlisle's laugh and took it for an imputation on his bravery.

"*Bon Dieu*, can we fight enemies with our backs as well as our fronts? Also, it is of a circumstance condemnable that our leaders run away. It's all over with us!"

He gesticulated frantically while all the other partners cursed him as they drew out the injured Todd and many more before they broke and clawed a way up over the benchland and off through the park lands.

"Missowa! Waseyawin!" Carlisle ordered. "Take the Indian hunters and trail them well clear of the river. Without canoes or many arms they'll have to beat a way south to the Assiniboine trails, so don't bother them any further than to see that they keep moving. Lewis, take Jarvis and the rest of the hurt men up to the post."

"You Galt have Spotted Deer get ready to take my despatch to James Bay and then get plenty of men to pry out that jam in the chasm. This place ought to drain by night, and we'll pick the fur packs and gear off the dry bottom. And you, Eugene, look after the canoes and salvage what you can."

Amid fresh, joyful shrieks from their squaws, the hunters scrambled away on their mission, and Lewis and Galt set about their respective tasks, while Carlisle waded back to the boom with Eugene.

Since the struggle began, he had had no opportunity to even glance aside to where he had left the others, but now he saw them in the same spot, Andrews bent over the prostrate Richelieu lying on the logs, Wayne standing beside with his rifle-butt grounded and Joan beckoning with anxious hands.

"*Diable!*" exclaimed Eugene. "W'at she be want now? W'at's wrong dere? I ain't be see any wan."

"It's Richelieu," deduced Carlisle. "He must be badly hurt. Go on and attend to the canoes, Eugene, before they get smashed up with floating ice."

He lunged ahead where Todd's canoe with Richelieu's broken flagstaff in the bow lay half-crushed against the boom and drew himself up dripping on the logs.

"What's the matter, Joan," he asked. "Is he badly wounded?"

"Andrews says he's going to die," she told him. "And he wants you. Hurry up!"

"Here, Paul," begged Andrews, "stand over where he can see you."

CARLISLE stepped over with Joan to where her father leaned on his rifle by Richelieu's side. The Northwester lay in the groove between two of the three rows of logs in the triple boom, his shoulders supported by Andrews. At first glance Carlisle noted where Wayne's bullet had pierced his uniform high and to the left of the middle of his breast.

There was little blood staining it above, but underneath the bark was red, and his breathing came in long irregular gasps. His black-bearded face was somber with an unearthly somberness on account of the pallor of the skin wherein the sunken pox-pits showed a bluish tinge. His eyelids lay shut, but at Andrews' whisper he opened them and stared weakly up into Carlisle's wondering face.

"*Dieu!*" he murmured, his eyes turning to Andrews. "It is my last breath, and it is good that it goes into confession, Father. I have lived in sin. That goes without saying. But I will not sink eternally into hell. *Oui*, and that is why I make confession openly and to all."

He paused, breathing heavily, while his eyes went back to Carlisle, to Joan and then to Wayne.

"It was I, Wayne," he confessed with electrifying unexpectedness. "That day, in the Wyoming Valley—that old day of Butler's Raid! *Mon Dieu*, you knew I loved her, but you did not know how much. I was young. I was a lieutenant. I was mad. In the panic of the raid I thought to make her ride away with me, but she was true. *Ciel*, yes, she was true, and I——"

He stopped, and Wayne gazed at him as a man of stone, an inanimate thing that can not comprehend. Then, sudden as his wrath, the full import of Richelieu's words flashed upon him, and he changed from a man of stone to a livid, quivering demon. Often as Carlisle had seen him in anger, he had never seen anything like the light that instantly fused his fawn-green eyes to incandescence.

It was as if all the fires of hell suddenly struck them and were glanced back. He opened his mouth, but not a word came forth. Then with an animal-like snarl he raised his rifle like a giant pestle in both hands, the butt poising over Richelieu's head as if to stamp out some vermin or reptile, some monstrous abortion that he had glimpsed in all its vileness.

Carlisle and Joan threw themselves upon him from either hand, Carlisle's grip locking his arms to his side. He raged like a fiend, but the Factor's great strength held him back, their bodies swaying from side to side on the logs, and as they swayed Richelieu began to speak again.

"*Voila!* And then I lied. I took you, Wayne, and told my story but named another man. I hated him. *Oui*, you do not know howI hated then, in my youth. I hated Charlie Carlisle for I knew he loved her too. So I laid my wrong upon him because he could not deny. *Comment?* No, he could not deny, wounded and drunk as he was. They were all drunk that day, and he knew not whether he fought man, woman or child, one or one thousand of them."

"My God!" breathed Carlisle, swift anger overwhelming the vibrant thrill that Richelieu's first words had sent pulsing through him. "You did that?"

He loosed his grip from Wayne, and oddly enough the surge of wrath in Carlisle left Wayne quiescent. He was a man of stone once more with one hand pressing on his rifle barrel, the other hand passed around Joan's waist.

Carlisle leaned over Richelieu, his face contorted with mingled emotion, righteous indignation, horror, disgust, suspense.

"My God, man—you did that?" he repeated.

"*Oui*," and the head nodded feebly, "but I knew his life would not be worth a franc while Wayne knew he was alive, and I had blood enough on my hands. So I smuggled him away till the heat of the day had died out of him, and then I told him what he had done."

"You incarnate fiend!" choked Carlisle, for into hs mind rose the vision of his father

as he had known him—tall, straight, handsome, the pride of his boyish eyes in the dashing uniform of a captain of the Rangers.

"Just so! He knew he would not have his life long if he stayed. And who could face his friends or his own flesh with that stain upon him? He disappeared, and one day a priest came into the post of Niagara to care for his boy."

"Who, pray?"

"Father Andrews, here!"

Carlisle leaned lower, his face abruptly charged with red blood.

"And he lived—lives yet?" he demanded.

"Why not? I have lived—till now. Wayne lives. Why not Charlie Carlisle? Take my word for it. If you don't take my word for it, ask Father Andrews here. Charlie Carlisle paid him to keep his secret and to raise you, and he knows. But be quick. I am weakening fast, and Andrews must give me absolution."

"Andrews—Andrews!" cried Carlisle, torn with emotion. "My father's alive?"

"Yes, Paul—yes."

"You know where he is?"

"Yes."

"And you'll take me to him now—I mean, soon, without delay?"

"Yes, soon," promised Andrews. "When we go down to Grande Portage I'll take you to him. Now go, quickly. Don't you see Richelieu's at his last breath?"

Andrews bent over Richelieu to give him final absolution, and Carlisle with his heart in a tumult and his face alight turned away to Wayne and Joan. Joan's eyes were shining into his through a film of moisture, but Wayne still stood like an image staring stonily at the strange confessional. Then he raised his eyes to Carlisle's and put out his gnarled hand.

"Richelieu isn't the only one who wronged you, Carlisle!" he exclaimed with a depth of feeling that shook his chest. "I've put a terrible wrong on you—on both you and your father."

"But, Wayne, you can make it right," smiled Carlisle, clasping the gnarled fist with one hand and significantly taking Joan's soft palm with the other. "All in a minute you can make it right."

Wayne looked from one to the other, and an ancient tenderness, a memory of vanished years, seemed to creep into his stony, mahogany face. His mask broke suddenly, and the tears ran down his cheeks.

"By the Doom, Carlisle," he muttered, laying his hands upon their shoulders, "I make it right."

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE TEMPLE OF THE WILD

"GRANDE PORTAGE at last, father!" exclaimed Joan, using words she had used a full year before as the Factor's craft grazed the Port Charlotte landing on the Pigeon River's bank. "It is good to get the canoe cramps out."

"Yes, Joan," nodded Wayne, a smile cracking the grim mahogany of his face as recollection stirred within him. "It's been a long day, but there's a nine-mile walk to stretch your legs."

"And not a packer to clutter up the trail!" laughed Carlisle, giving Joan his hand to help her out. "Look at Port Charlotte—empty as a last year's bird's nest! Look at the Portage—deserted to the skyline! We'll have a quick passage over."

Twelve months ago he had gone into Cumberland House with a lone canoe. Now he had come out down the Saskatchewan, Lake Winnipeg, through the Winnipeg River, the Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake and the Pigeon River with a fleet of fifteen hundred paddles. As he turned off up the trail with Joan, followed by Wayne and Andrews, he waved a sign to his brigade leader Drummond to unload the massed brigades and pack over after him.

Side by side in the warm glow of the July evening he and Joan climbed up over the three miles of gentle convolutions that terraced the way to the loftiest ridge before they looked back, and when they glanced around they beheld an unbroken line of pack-laden men crawling upward with the slow, peculiar, bobbing motion that packs in the tump-line impart.

The sight brought home more clearly to Joan the memory of that other evening when Carlisle and Andrews had come over the Portage with their warning, and she began to laugh softly in low, throaty notes that blended with songs of the thrushes by the trailside.

"Do you remember, Paul, how you came to tell us the Portage was closed? You were a Northwest mail courier in black cotton shirt, mackinaw trousers, cowhide moccasins and a battered, blue felt hat. Yes, and

your face was stained as brown as an Indian's. Do you remember?"

"Yes," nodded Carlisle, "I remember that masquerade, all right, and I remember how I cursed it when you came."

"Why?" she teased, "because it was so dirty?"

"No, you cherished hypocrite, because I wanted you to know me as I was. I wanted to stand in the skin God gave me."

"Conceited thing!" Joan bantered. "As if that amounted to much! And as if I cared at all!"

She fluted out her laughter freely as she darted down the Grande Portage slope of the trail, away from the reach of his impulsive arm. Graceful as a fawn she ran, breaking into song in the sheer joy of her surroundings and inner being, and Carlisle, his heart singing too in anticipation of the union and the reunion that was to be, sprang lightly after.

They swish-swished in their moccasins across the corduroy paths of the beaver meadows, over the small, bridged creeks, down the hundred-foot gulches that dropped like steps toward Lake Superior. Through the patches of poplar and birch and the heart of the grand pinery they descended, now slowly to a walk, now quickening to a run till they traversed the last mile of the long slope and came out into the clearing close to the Northwest post.

As at Port Charlotte and along the whole length of the Portage, there was not a man to be seen. Yet men had been here not long before, for in the canoe harbor the recovered fur sloop *Otter* and many big Rabiscaw canoes from Montreal were tied, and upon the curving sand beach burned the evening fires of the canoemen.

Breathing themselves while they waited for the others, Carlisle and Joan stared at the scene before them with the sympathetic eyes of children blooded to the wild. Afar surged the vast green expanse of Lake Superior gilded with the molten wash of gold spilled over the high, wooded mainland ridge where the Pigeon River brawled down to its rest on the mighty bosom, scrolled with its white-crested waves.

Nearer at hand spread the channel, a mile and one-quarter wide, screened by the tree-crowned island that almost yielded to the primeval embrace of the mainland. As they had seen it a year ago, so they saw it now, the sheltering island with its rubble of great, gnarled boulders littering the beach, its long, sloping point sheering up and its rampart of bush standing solid above.

Their eyes followed the amphitheater of the bay, a crescent sweep of shallow water, delicate green in color and clear as air, edged by a low, flat shore that was backed in turn by terraced Laurentian hills.

Tier upon tier the hills rose as of old, the lowest three hundred feet in height, the highest over one thousand, covered with crowding forest of birch and spruce and pine thrusting out virgin arms to embrace the lesser island. Yonder was the natural barrier, the forty-foot cliff of rock walling the back of the level shore land and curving westward into the lake. Not a tree or a stone was changed or gone!

Along the eastern side foamed the small stream in unvaried volume, and there, without addition or diminution the post buildings crouched behind their eighteen-foot cedar palings with the gate fast closed, while the same tent villages and teepees and cabins dotted the eastern bank of the stream with the same cattle grazing on the meadows and terraces farther back.

In the midst of their silent gazing they heard the feet of Wayne and Andrews and the packers behind, and with one accord they moved on along the path that led to the closed gate of the post.

EIGHTEEN feet in the air Thompson's quizzical Welsh face peered down at them over the top of the palisades.

"By St. John, Carlisle!" he greeted. "Art here, then? Had word of 'ee. Hast come in peace or in war?"

"In peace, Davvy, old friend," laughed Carlisle. "There's no need to trouble you. Open the gate."

"Ha! Is good news," grinned Davvy. "Wouldst not want tuh slaying of all with my own hands. Am all alone here."

Joan, Carlisle and the rest burst into hearty laughter as Thompson's head disappeared from the palisades to reappear a moment later in the open entrance.

"That was a bold front you put on for a solitary man, Davvy," chaffed Carlisle shaking his hand prodigiously. "I wondered why Port Charlotte and the Portage were deserted."

"Word of thy doings came down tuh waterways," Thompson explained, "and

not a man wouldst stay. The Eastern partners wouldst not come past tuh Kaministiquia, and tuh Indians and tuh Montreal paddlers here took to tuh bush."

"They don't need to be alarmed," Carlisle assured him. "All we want is a peaceful passage. You see, Davvy, the Hudson's Bay Company has smashed the Northwesters to pieces in the hinterland, and the absorption of the pieces will not be long delayed. Amalgamation is coming, old friend, and you yourself will be back with us again."

"By St. John! Dost say so, old roamer? Wilt not grieve me any if canst keep clear of Colen. Hast loved thee like a brother, Carlisle, and wilt go with a good heart if tuh Hudson's Bay takes tuh Northwest Company over. Wilt be no trade this Summer anyway, so wast thinking of going West to hew a new pass over tuh Rockies."

"Then you'll hew it for the Hudson's Bay Company in the end, Davvy."

Thompson shrugged his shoulders.

"What matter, Carlisle? Tuh land is bigger than any institution, is greater than its furs. Wilt be an empire in tuh end of all. And thou? Art going to James Bay?"

"Yes, Davvy."

"Art stopping tuh night here?"

"No, we'll travel the lake when the breeze dies down. Tomorrow we may have to lie up wind-bound on the shore. Will you give Miss Wayne and Father Andrews the use of your post for a few minutes? She wants to put on another dress, and Andrews a new cassock."

"Wilt give me pleasure," agreed Thompson, saluting Joan and the others gravely. "But what is tuh purpose?"

"Davvy," smiled Carlisle, "the last time I was here as a mail courier, I had a hand in saving a certain young lady from being carried off against her will. Now she's being carried off with her own consent."

Thompson's eyes opened wide, his face creased in a grin of remembrance and comprehension, and he suddenly extended his hand to the girl.

"Ha! Is that, then? Wilt congratulate you, Miss Wayne. Yon dirty courier is lucky man. Art most beautiful woman hast ever seen. Come in. Wilt give 'ee my own house for tuh purpose, you and tuh priest."

He led Joan and Andrews inside, while Carlisle and Wayne passed on to the beach where the first packers were letting down the canoes and fur bales and more and more were arriving every minute in the gathering dusk and slipping their tump-lines to the ground.

Carlisle knew such a freight of fur throughout the whole history of the fur trade had never come over the Grande Portage in a single season. Not only the vast catch of the Hudson's Bay Company was in transit but also the large take of the Northwest Company which he had captured from Richelieu, the McKenzies, Todd, McLeod, McDougall, McGillivray and Sager in the Devil's Elbow.

Their yearly turnover, greater than any other turnover known in America, had turned to his hands, and it would continue to so turn. Vast as had been the institution of the Northwesters, it was, like the trust of the Free-Traders, shaken to its foundations by a combination of organized warfare and Divine visitation.

The Montreal brigades of rivermen were here, slinking in the woods, but this year the Northmen from the Pays d'en Haut would not gather to meet them.

GRANDE PORTAGE was an open road, not a private gateway to the West, and though it would be used for some time by his company as an entrepot for inland business and as an outlet on Superior, Carlisle saw in his mind's eye a changing of the routes by which the fur would all flow to Hudson's Bay instead of to Montreal.

He pictured the dwindling of the Grande Portage, the spot where the brains of the Northwest Company had been situated though its nominal headquarters pulsed in Beaver Hall, the spot from which the ruthless power of the organization was distributed in stupendous ramifications, like electric energy from a distant waterfall. And in the end he saw the post dismantled, its foundations buried in the sand and scrub, the Portage unused, the Western highway forgotten!

Something of the same thought was running through Wayne's mind as he watched the packing down and the relaunching and reloading of the canoes, and Carlisle, turning to speak to him, caught it in his eye.

"You see it too, Wayne?" he ventured. "You see the glory departing from this place?"

"Yes, it's sure to go down now," prophesied Wayne, his eyes fixed seer-like, "and the first wagon-road linking up the East and the West will carve its epitaph."

"Sometimes I see a road of my own," Carlisle confided, "from the Pays d'en Haut to Hudson's Bay. Yes, and sometimes I even see the shoals of the bay gouged out and a regular fleet of ships sailing there. It's going to be as Thompson says, a country bigger than any individual, bigger than any institution, an empire in the end. Furthermore it's going to be an empire no man can be ashamed of, Wayne. Why not have a hand in its making?"

Wayne shook his head disconsolately.

"No, I'm going back when we reach Michipicoten, back to the Wyoming Valley. It was unrest drove me out, Carlisle. It's rest, content, that's taking me home."

"But you'll come sometimes, come to see her?"

"Every year in the Spring—when the wanderlust stirs! During the months I won't see her, I tell you I'll be very lonely, Carlisle. But don't let her know that. Never a word. Look out—here she comes!"

She was coming out of the post with Thompson and Andrews and time was suddenly telescoped for Carlisle. He beheld her as he had first beheld her that evening she had stepped out of her father's canoe at Port Charlotte, and as he gazed at her he had the mystic feeling that this was that very moment. There had been no long, hard, danger-ridden months, no bitter blood feud, no deadly rivalry between.

Here glided her swelling-hipped, full-bosomed figure, erect, agile, supple in poise, with the graceful strength in the curves of the limbs, as it had first glided into his consciousness. Here shimmered her radiant hair, yellow, wheaten, spun-gold all in one, like the mingling hues of the birchen leaves in Autumn, framing the laughing-eyed, crimson-sprayed, red-lipped face.

Only, she wore the clinging champagne-colored dress of silk that she had worn at Andrews' first open-air service on the shores of Pine Island Lake, the snow-white doeskin half-moccasins peeping from underneath, the single jewel at her throat.

Carlisle caught his breath deeply as he walked out with Wayne upon the shoreway of the canoe pier, his ermine canoe-robe over his shoulder. On the eastern or harbor arm of the cribwork that extended but halfway back to land he spread the robe for Joan's feet and stood upon it with her, Wayne at their side, Andrews in front.

In the crystal-clear water of the canoe harbor at their feet floated his huge six-fathom craft with the Hudson's Bay Company's crimson flag in the bow, his own streaming gonfalon in the stern. His tried crew were poised in their places, Waseyawin in the bow, Missowa in the stern, the two middlemen paired forward, the two others paired aft, their paddle shafts decorated with the gaudy woolen streamers, their bright-beaded moccasins, gay leggins, flaming belts and scarfs flashing many hues, their black-haired, fillet-bound heads carrying the long, graceful, slanting, violent-colored plumes that proclaimed them Factor's canoemen.

Close beside nosed the canoes of the officers, Galt, Drummond, Lewis, Garry, Lea, Jarvis, Hampton, Wells, while behind them the massed brigades covered the entire canoe harbor, the blood-red stars burning upon their warm-yellow bows like the fires upon the beach.

Alone by the fires stood Thompson, sole guest of the Northwest Company till presently the Montreal brigades lurking in the woods on either hand took heart to emerge. They had marked the Hudson's Bay fleet all afloat, marked how things were shaping on the pier and crept out, three hundred and fifty of them, to gather silently 'round on the sandy flat—the giant Pork Eaters, French voyageurs off the Ottawa River and the parishes around, Iroquois Indians, Caughnawaga Indians, the famed rivermen of the Rabiscaws.

A TAMED, voiceless host they gathered, for this season their carnival among the Northmen would not ring, their carousal would not rage, with their songs and their *boissons* and their deviltry, and for them the code of the law was written farther than the Sault.

They stared in wonder while the same priest they had seen in Grande Portage the year before raised his voice from the rude altar of the canoe pier in the spruce-walled, starry-naved temple of the wild.

"On the winds of the wilderness and to you dwellers in the wilderness," he declaimed, "I publish the banns!"

Sonorously Andrews' voice sounded as he went on to complete the ceremony, and

even as he finished the shade of Bertand the Montreal mail courier seemed to rise from the depths of Grande Portage Bay.

There came the snoring surge of waters swiftly cloven, a triumphant yell out of the lakeward dark, the thump of a quickly-wielded paddle upon a canoe gunwale, and the next instant a lone birchbark craft tore through the water-gate of the pier and spilled its lone occupant on the cribwork at their feet.

"Spotted Deer!" exclaimed Carlisle, recognizing the Cree dispatch-bearer he had sent down to James Bay by the Hayes with the report of victory for the governor.

"Ae," replied Spotted Deer, "with the sun and the stars I have paddled to meet you here."

He held out a dispatch that bore the governor's seal.

Hastily Carlisle broke it open and glanced it over in the red flare that the camp-fires sent across the water. His hand shook a little as he passed it on to Andrews.

"Read it out, Andrews," he begged. "It concerns them all as well as me."

Andrews read aloud:

I was overjoyed to get the news of the Northwesters' defeat. Its consequences will be far-reaching indeed. It means no less than the conserving of our charter till such time as we see fit to surrender it. It means the founding of a Western empire which we shall pioneer.

Words can not express my delight and my satisfaction at the trust I had in you, and I want to record that trust in a more material way. As I wrote you, the James Bay climate has been hard on me. The doctor here at York Factory says I have no option but to leave.

So I must sail on the London fur vessel this Summer. I shall carry my resignation with me, and you I have appointed temporary governor in my stead till I reach England and have the London Committee ratify the appointment. Any appointments you may think due those under you, I shall also slate accordingly, as one of my last acts before giving up the governorship.

Spotted Deer speaks of a rumor that runs hinting of another honor you will win. My sincerest congratulations and the hope to see you both soon! I am arranging a grand reception for you when you reach James Bay.

"Paul—Paul!" breathed Joan tensely, while Carlisle, his eyes shining into hers, mutely pressed her hands.

"You dwellers in the wilderness, I introduce Governor Carlisle and his wife!" announced Andrews, handing the dispatch back and stepping aside.

From the massed brigades a vociferous cheer thundered out, and simultaneously the fifteen hundred paddles poised in perpendicular salute, the crimson firelight flashing from the blades.

Carlisle acknowledged the salute with upraised hand and began to speak in resonant tones fraught with deep emotion.

"Men of the Hudson's Bay, I take the governor at his word. You have earned more than any men may get in this world, but this much at least may be yours. To Galt, Lewis, Lea, Garry, Hampton, Jarvis, and Wells I give the permanent Factorships, of Cumberland House, the Pas, the Nepowin, Moose Lake, Chimawawin, Grand Rapids and the Carrot River.

"Waseyawin, Missowa and their middlemen are no longer Factor's crew. They are governor's crew, and to the middlemen I add Smoking Pine and Spotted Deer. And you, Drummond, I make chief brigade Leader of all the Hudson's Bay Company's brigades."

A second time the vociferous cheer thundered out, the generous-hearted tribute of the brigade men to these honored officers, and the officers in grim pride acknowledged the tribute—all but Eugene Drummond.

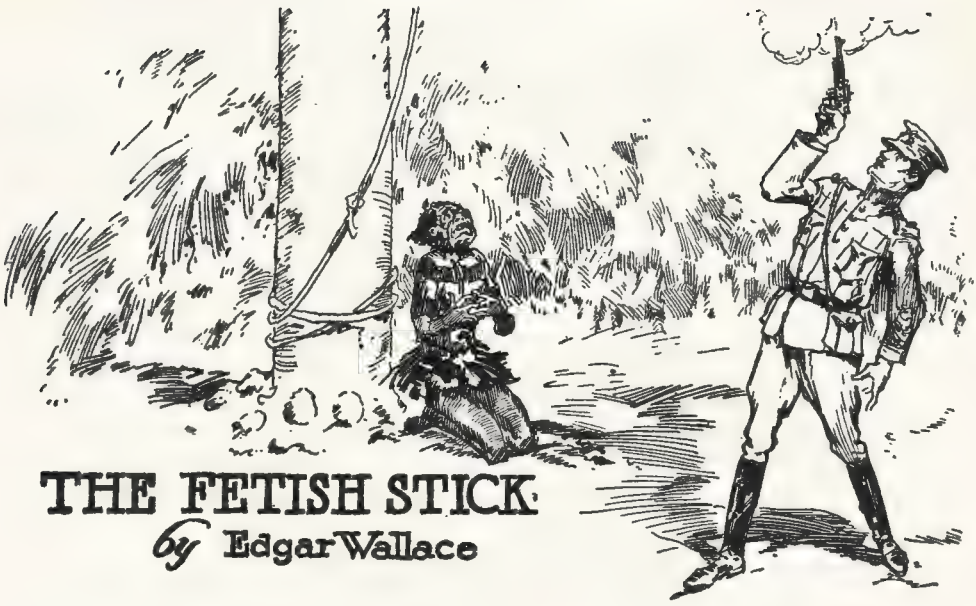
His *diable* mystery was dissolving at last, and, unthinking of his high appointment, his volatile face worked, his milk-white teeth gleamed, his thin nostrils quivered, his coal-black eyes danced as he stared at Andrews on the pier loosing the cord to drop his brand-new cassock and pull away the mosquito veil.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried Eugene, gesticulating with outstretched finger and streaming his raven hair this way and that with nervous head jerks. "*Mon Dieu*—look there!"

Carlisle, Joan and Wayne wheeled swiftly, but Andrews was not there.

By the discarded cassock and mosquito veil stood a tall, straight, handsome, gray-haired, grave-faced stranger in the ancient but dashing uniform of Butler's Rangers.

"By the Doom—Captain Charles Carlisle!" identified Wayne.



THE FETISH STICK

by Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Fluent Adventurer," "The Sleuth," etc.

VIEWED from the sea the headquarters of Mr. Commissioner Sanders was a strip of golden sand fringed to the seaward side by a green backing of trees. You caught a glimpse of the white residency with its red roof and on a very clear day the little flagstaff where the national standard hung limply. Perhaps you might even see the long rows of yellow barrack huts where the Housas lived, but you saw little more.

Officers of passing steamers which came sufficiently near the west African coast would point out the mouth of the river and show the passengers how the yellow waters ran far out, cutting a muddy roadway into the indigo-blue of the sea and sometimes a mail steamer would slow down and drop into a waiting surf-boat a small mail-bag.

But the territories and the three white men who ruled them had no personality to the ocean-going wanderers until a certain day when a beneficent Government placed in the hands of the commissioner a means by which he and his fellows might become at least articulate.

Lieutenant Tibbetts coming to breakfast one fiery morning discovered a folded sheet of foolscap paper beneath his plate.

"Ha, Monday, sir!" said he with an extravagant start, as though the discovery that this was indeed the second day of the week came in the nature of a shock, "and orders of the week as per regulations."

"Read 'em you lazy de—fellow," said Hamilton, catching his sister's reproving eye.

"Quite unnecessary, my jolly old tyrant," said Bones airily, as he shook his serviette free with a loud "*flap!*" and all but caught Mr. Commissioner Sanders' coffee-cup. "Quite superfluous—I know 'em by heart:

"'1. The orderly officer of the week is poor old Bones, who will do everything every day.

"'2. Field trainin' will be carried out on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday an' Saturday under the command of poor old Bones.

"'3. Kit inspection on Thursday. Bones will arrange.

"'By order.'"

"Read it," suggested Hamilton.

With a hoist of his shoulders Bones opened the paper and read.

" 'Orderly officer for the week: Lt. Tibbetts'—what did I say? 'Field trainin' in accordance with paragraph'—um—um—'Lt. Tibbetts'—as expected—hullo, dear old sir—what's this?

"'3. On the erection of the new flagstaff and signal yard, Lt. Tibbetts will assume

the duties of O. C. Signals. He will be responsible for the maintenance in good condition of the signal locker and flags, code books——' "

"They are sending the pole down from H. Q. administration," explained Hamilton, "and it should be up by the end of the week—do you know anything about signals, Bones?"

Bones smiled.

"I think I may say in all modesty, dear old sir," he said with fine carelessness, "that there's jolly little I don't know about signals. I hate to boast, dear old Ham, as you've often said——"

"I've never said anything so untruthful—but I should not let that discourage you," interrupted Hamilton, "nor should it divert your mind from the fact that I asked you a very simple question to which you have not yet replied. Do you understand signals?"

"I won't deceive you," said Bones solemnly, "I do."

AND this he proved, for when the great new flagstaff had been erected, and the Government tug which had towed the pole to the beach had turned its nose for home, Bones, with the aid of the Government code-book, signalled—

"Wish you pleasant voyage."

Whereupon the tug spun 'round and came back at full speed.

"The signal flags H.L.M.I., sir," said the exasperated skipper of the tug, "do not mean 'Wish you pleasant voyage,' but 'return at once; natives are in revolt.' "

"Dear me!" said Bones, "how jolly romantic!"

And so the tug went off again and Bones undeterred sent a string of flags fluttering up to the yard which the skipper read—

"Am short of coal—can you tow me?" Which he rightly interpreted as being something rather complimentary in farewell messages.

Bones not only took kindly to his new job, but it became for him an absorbing passion. Not only did he spend his spare hours poring over the Government and mercantile codes, but he invented a code of his own.

Not only had he signal flags, but in a great box, each enclosed in a neat canvas bag, were the ensigns of the nations "for employment"—said the printed instructions—"in saluting war vessels, governors, commissioners, etc., of foreign powers."

"Some of 'em wholly superfluous, dear old sir," he complained, "unless we receive a visit from the Swiss fleet or hobnob with the jolly old King of Siam—an' who the dooce am I to salute with the German Royal Standard? With a war like this going on it can't be done, dear old thing!"

Life had a new interest not only for himself, but for every native within ten miles of the station. Visitors and residents alike would gather about the flagstaff and watch Bones as he played with his new toy. And one of these visitors was the son of the sister of a certain Buluta, and a notorious thief.

Of this small fact Bones was oblivious in the ecstasy of new discoveries, for he found friends which in olden days moved outside of his orbit. He sent astounding greetings to little old tramps that came rolling over the edge of the ocean, spoke hilariously to passing liners which answered briefly and often coldly—the "affirmative" in answer to a sixteen-flag message was little short of a snub—and once when a lean gray American warship came nosing out of nowhere looking for submarines Bones surpassed himself in a cordial greeting which ran, literally:

D. S. Y.	Y.D. has arrived at this port.
L. X. A. B.	Have cavalry chargers on board.
T. S. Y. R.	Am carrying feathers and hats.
U. G. M.	Please arrange supply wine and macaroni for Italian emigrants.

The commander of the American warship, fortunately, thought that there was a regatta or a Fourth of July celebration on shore and contented himself with signaling —"Good-by."

"And what the dickens were you trying to say?" asked Hamilton when Bones complained bitterly of the lack of international courtesy.

"My dear but dull old landlubber," said

Bones wearily, "it's as plain as your jolly old nose. If Sanders were here he'd understand it in a minute. I've studied the dashed thing an' worked it out."

"But what does it mean?" insisted Hamilton.

Bones uttered impatient sounds.

"It's a verse," he said shortly, "that jolly little tune:

> "Yankee Doodle came to town
> Riding on a pony
> He stuck a feather——"

"If you're going to laugh," said Bones huffily, "there's nothin' more to be said, sir," and he closed the book with a bang.

Bones was frankly bad-tempered that morning, for in addition to other vexations he had discovered the loss of a certain national ensign which had disappeared from under his eyes.

ABOUT this time in the forest village of Kasanga a man fell sick. He had pains in his head, shooting, throbbing stabs of agony that did not cease by day or night.

He was lucky in that there lived in this village a very famous witch-doctor, one Buluta, to whom all the forest folk went in their hour of adversity. His fame passed the frontiers of his own land and you might not travel for a day anywhere in the river territories without coming upon a man or woman who wore on his or her breast one of those charms which were characteristic of Buluta.

If you take a palm-kernel, soak it in a solution of gum and camwood, thread it neatly with two steel wires and turn the free ends of the wires until each forms the letter "P," you have a fair imitation of that powerful spellmaker which cured coughs and insured for married men the fidelity of their wives.

The sick would pay him a chicken for his services, and this gift was tied to one of the legs of the sufferer, and Buluta, kneeling by the patient's side, would knead and pound the unfortunate body of his victim, starting from the head and working down to the feet until the evil spirit which possessed the patient and which caused his unhappiness would depart with a loud cry—which Buluta himself supplied—into the body of the bird. Whereupon he would cut off the head of the bird, sprinkle a few drops of his blood upon the gratified patient who by this time should have felt such relief as would enable him to rise and call his doctor blessed.

And in most cases this relief was instantaneous and complete. Sometimes Buluta would find no response to his treatment, but that was invariably explained to his own credit by the discovery of bewitchment or a peculiarly strong devil whom the sick man had offended.

In such cases as these Buluta would go into the forest for a consideration and conduct an expensive wrestling match with the devil. Usually by the time he returned to the village to discover what had happened to the patient—the patient had died.

Now this man who laid so grievously sick was rich and Buluta had long envied him his wealth, so that when he was summoned by the man's principal wife he saw the magnificence of the opportunity.

He had the patient stripped and laid upon a wooden grille and beneath him he lit a fire of herbs that sent up a very thick and pungent smoke.

He also painted all the toes of the sick man with red camwood that the devils might not enter his body. Then he cut little patterns in the chest of Kofubu—that was the man's name—with a small keen knife. What other treatment he would have introduced may only be surmised.

Since it was acknowledged that none was greater than Buluta and that if he could not cure Kofubu no other witch-doctor could perform that service for him, the philosophical villagers decided that he must be left to die, and death would certainly have been his fate but for the happy circumstance that Mr. Commissioner Sanders was making a tour through the forest villages, and arrived one evening when the seven wives of Kofubu were discussing the division of his property.

Sanders carried a hairy little medicine-chest which contained a few, but powerful drugs, designed to meet the half-a-dozen epidemic or simple maladies native to the country. If the disease was outside the range of the six diseases for which he had made provision, the sick man or woman was treated for the commonplace ailment which it most nearly resembled.

Sanders went into the hut of the man

and found two strands of wire tightly bound about his skull, these strands having been in place for some twelve years. They were rather difficult to cut, and Kofubu suffered something in the process, but when they were removed and after the man had spent a night under the influence of one of Sanders' six medicants, he discovered that his pain had disappeared.

"I think you are a fool, Kofubu," said Sanders, "for who but a fool would put wire about his head?"

"Lord," said Kofubu ruefully, "that was a very powerful charm which kept from me ghosts and evil devils."

"You were nearer to ghosts and evil devils than you know, my man," said Sanders with a wry smile. He had no use for witch-doctors of any kind.

Sanders sent for the medicine-man.

"Buluta," said he, "do you believe in devils?"

"Lord, I do," replied the man apprehensively eying the stick which Sanders carried.

"And do you believe that your devils will save you pain?"

The man, still with his eye on the stick, edged away.

"Answer!" said Sanders sharply.

"Lord, it is said that we wise men do not feel—ouch!"

"And now," said Sanders, when the flogging was finished, "hear my words. I will have no witch-doctor who draws blood in this land. This time I beat, but if I send for you because you have done this evil again, I will await you at the Village of Irons, and there you shall stay for ten years."

The commissioner passed on the next day and Buluta was forgotten, but Buluta did not forget.

IT WAS a month or five weeks after Sanders had come and gone, that Buluta sent secret messengers to all the tribes, to the N'gombi, the Inner N'gombi, to the Akasava, the Lesser Akasava and the Three-Streams Akasava, to the Isisi, the Lesser Isisi, to the Ochori and the Upper Ochori and even into the forbidden land of the Old King.

To no chiefs or headmen did his summons go, but to strange old men who lived apart from the communities to which they were attached, and on the night his call reached them, they left their villages furtively and came by hidden ways to the rendezvous which Buluta had appointed. This was one of those famous islands where bats hang in great bunches from the trees throughout the hot day and fly by the thousand over the river at night. There never was such an assembly in all the history of the land since the day when they buried Gufufu, the witch-doctor.

There were old men and there were young men too. Men fantastically arrayed in skins of unknown animals, men belted about with teeth and claws, men cloaked in feathers, men streaked and circled with paint and they came to sit at the feet of Buluta and learn his will.

"Wise goats," said Buluta, "I have called you that I may tell of wonders, for I who understand devils and have fought with terrible ghosts have been beaten by Sandi because he hates me. Also I have discovered a great wonder. All men know that Sandi has a *ju-ju* which tells him when any man breaks the law—for have not the people of the river held very private palavers and has not Sandi come swiftly? And when the Akasava went secretly to make war and none knew, save the king, where the goats would bleed, was not Sandi waiting in the Isisi River for their coming?"

"Wa!" chorused his audience, "all men know this."

Buluta's eyes blazed.

"Now I have found the mystery," he shouted in triumph, "Sandi has a wonderful fetish!"

"That is foolish talk," said a skeptic in the circle, "for all people know that Sandi is a white man and white men have no fetishes."

"Wa! that is true," said another, "for did not Sandi beat me cruelly because I smelt out one who had bewitched the daughter of Kumulubu the chief of the Lesser Isisi?"

"Let all men hear this," cried Buluta, "Sandi who lives in a fine house by the sea has put up a great stick near where the big water runs, and that is his fetish for the son of my sister who has newly come from Sandi's home, tells me this and every morning Tibbetti, the young one, goes before this stick and bows himself and picks up pieces of cloth and hangs it upon the stick and puts his hand to his face thus."

One of the old witch-doctors nodded.

"I also have seen Bonsei put his hand to his face when he speaks to my Lord Sandi and to Militini, and a soldier of Sandi's told me that he does this thing to do honor to Militini and to Sandi, who are his chiefs. Now, tell us, Buluta, what may we do?"

Buluta raised his hands, he was almost incoherent in his excitement.

"We will make a dance and a devil palaver, such a palaver as never was seen in this land, and we ourselves will put up a great stick so that we may talk with ghosts, for the son of my sister has stolen a wonderful cloth such as Tibbetti hangs, and this is surely a great magic and a charm for sickness. And since we shall be as great as Sandi he shall not harm us if through our medicine men die. Also because he beat me, I will lay a spell upon him and he will go mad. Wa!"

For six days there were mysterious doings on the Island of Bats, fifty separate fires burned and smoked and the awe-stricken villagers on the mainland watched this evidence of the witch-doctor's activity with their knuckles to their teeth. There was sacrificing of goats and chickens and a score of snakes died in the course of twenty different rituals. There was a pounding and a mixing, a dancing and a chanting beyond all precedent, and when a week and three days had gone by Buluta and five delegates launched their canoe and struck down the river to the forest of tall trees to choose "The Stick" and annoint their find with proper ceremony.

NEWS of a gathering of witch-doctors reached Sanders and the commissioner acted quickly. Bones was torn from his tangled halyards and his chaotic signal locker and dispatched, he protesting, in search of proofs.

Near the Forest of Happy Dreams the river broadens until it forms a great lake, where, on hazy days, it is almost impossible to see from shore to shore. Steersmen loathe this breadth of water because sandbanks grow in a night and islands that you chart on your way up give way to five fathoms of water on your way down-stream. There are places in this lake where a steamer can bump her way into deep water and find herself within a sandy circle from whence there is no escape. On such occasions all the crew descend into the water and literally lift the steamer from her embarrassing position.

On a hot day in July a little steamer specklessly white, her tall twin funnels belching a constant billow of black smoke, picked an erratic way through the lake. Two sounding boys sat in her bows and stabbed the water at intervals of a few seconds with long rods, transmitting the depth in tones of abysmal weariness.

Bones, standing on the bridge of the *Zaire* with a telescope under his arm and a very severe and disapproving frown upon his forehead watched the maneuver of the Government ship with every indication of impatience.

"Oh, Yoka," he said at last, turning to the steersman, "is there no straight course, for when I brought the *Zaire* through this broad river I turned neither to the left nor to the right?"

"Lord," said the Kano boy who steered, not taking his eyes from the waters ahead, "who knows this river—every day the water finds a new way?"

Bones turned to a weary "Tut!" and his thoughts went back longingly to a cool beach and a high white flagstaff.

Presently he spoke again in Arabic.

"Now my great eyes can see the course," he said, "you shall go to the middle waters."

"Master," said Yoka earnestly, "I think there is sand in the middle waters."

"It is an order," said the imperious Bones.

The wheel spun 'round under the helmsman's hand and the nose of the *Zaire* pushed 'round. They struck the strong river current. The black waters piled themselves up before the bows.

"Exactly," said Bones complacently, "I thought we should do it."

Suddenly the speed of the vessel perceptibly stopped and Yoka, who knew that this meant that she was reaching shallow water, spun the wheel with feverish haste. There was a shivering bump, another and a whole series of frantic little hops, and though the stern-wheel thrashed furiously the *Zaire* went neither forward nor backward.

"Master," said Yoka simply, "this is a sandbank."

Bones said nothing. He took his big pipe from his pocket, deliberately loaded it with tobacco, struck a match and lit it

and puffed cloudily. He was apparently deep in thought. Then at last he spoke.

"We shall have to get her off," he said.

Unfortunately the *Zaire* on this trip was carrying a skeleton crew. There were a dozen Housas, a few deck hands, a native engineer, also half a dozen villagers who had begged a passage to Youkombi.

Moreover, part of the *Zaire* lay in deep water so that it was impossible to wade. Bones rang the engines first to stop and then to astern, but the *Zaire* was firmly fixed.

"But presently the river will rise," he said to Yoka confidently, "and the water will wash away the sand."

Yoka scratched his chin.

"I think the waters are going down, lord," he said, "for the river was in flood six days ago and there have been no rains."

"You are a silly old ass," said the annoyed Bones.

He scanned the horizon for a sign of a village, though he might have known that there was none, for he had passed through the lake fifty times. Bones' motto, however, was that "you never know," and such was his optimistic spirit that he, at any rate, would not have been surprised to have discovered a fairly large-sized township, equipped with, amongst other things, a complete dredging plant, had established itself since his last visit.

There was only one thing to do. Bones ordered the canoe to be launched, and with four paddlers and one Housa as an escort he made his way to the nearest village which, as it happened, was situated on the big middle island that lay athwart the northern end of the lake. There was, as he knew, a footpath close to the river, and he started off on his two-mile tramp to Youkombi, the village in question.

A mile from the point of his departure the path divided, for here the land forms a promontory. One path naturally followed the water, but the other cut straight across the neck of the salient and formed a short way for such people as did not fear ghosts. Bones took the nearer path, and in consequence he did not see the two watchers who squatted by the side of the water only waiting for a glimpse of the *Zaire* to fly back with their discovery to Youkombi.

It also happened that when he reached the point where the paths were reunited, instead of following the one broad track that leads to the village, he followed the forest path which took him away to the left, for he was anxious to see for himself whether certain allegations against the people of the Youkombi were well founded. Though he was not conscious of the fact, here he missed the second group of watchers who, as a matter of precaution, had been placed on the road half a mile from the village.

Bones searched diligently and patiently, for in all matters of strict and serious duty Bones was conscientious to a fault. His search was well rewarded, for under a dwarf mimosa and almost hidden by the rank foliage which smothered the ground he discovered a bundle wrapped in native cloth and containing certain little wooden pots of native manufacture which were filled with vari-colored clay. There was red and green and vivid orange, blue and brown. Also there was a necklace of human teeth, a mask of feathers and a strange-looking ivory instrument shaped rather like a tuning-fork.

BONES met no villager, and it was extremely unlikely that he would, because the whole of Youkombi was sitting in wrapt silence watching a man fantastically hued with great white rings painted 'round his eyes and blue and green stripes of ocher running across his shrunken breast. They would have been interested in Buluta under any circumstances, for his name was a household word from the territory of the Great King to the villages by the sea. But what added fascination to his own personality was the fact that he was at that moment engaged, under the professional inspection of fifty witch-doctors, in curing the first wife of the headman of the Youkombi.

The cure was a simple business. She lay, spread-eagled, on the ground, ankles and wrists attached by stout rawhide thongs to little sticks which had been driven in the ground and he was letting out the nine and nine devils with which she was possessed, from time to time lecturing as an anatomical professor to his fascinated audience.

"Oh, people and wise ones, thus you see my magic," he said, brandishing his little knife and rubbing his nose with the back of his lean hand, "because of the wonderful things I do now Sandi would hate me and

follow me with guns. But now because of a great magic which I have done, I am greater than Sandi and I may do many things which were forbidden. I cut this woman a little—so. What do you see, wise brothers and people of the Youkombi? Just a little blood. Do you see the little devils with eyes like moons? Only Buluta sees those. Look, there he goes!"

His bony finger pointed and traced the passage of the mythical devil, and as it indicated a progress nearer and nearer to the circle those who stood in its line leaped out and sprang shivering back to allow it passage.

"There it goes," he croaked, "into the forest! I see it! It is gone! Presently it will come back a very beautiful wonder. None will see it but I!"

He bent his head as though listening, his hand to his ear.

"My *ju-ju* tells me it is coming. Look, look!" he pointed again to the forest, "it comes!"

An appropriate moment this, for Bones to make his appearance which he did quite unknowing that he fitted so well into the scheme of clairvoyance. The people stood dumfounded, their knuckles to their mouths.

"This is a great wonder," said the headman of Youkombi, "for this good devil looks like Tibbetti."

But the witch-doctor did not reply. This was a moment too great for words. As for his fifty hideous colleagues they faded into the shadow of the woods.

Bones marched into the circle, his helmet pulled rakishly over one eye, an eye-glass in the other and stood looking down at the medicine-man and his victim. He dropped his cane lightly on the shoulder of the headman.

"Take this woman away, Kabala," he said, "afterward you shall call a palaver of your people."

He turned his attention to the witch-doctor.

"Oh, Buluta," he said, "Sandi wants you."

The witch-doctor licked his lips. Before him was the supreme injustice of a ten years' sentence—and that it was unjust he stoutly believed.

He looked 'round helplessly and then—

"Lord!" he cried, his eyes bright with hope, "by my magic and my *ju-ju* you may not touch me, for I am favored by a fetish stick greater than Sandi's—look!"

Bones' eyes followed the pointed finger. For the first time he saw the tall roughly dressed flagstaff.

"Good gracious, heaven an' earth!" gasped Bones.

"Lord," Buluta went on proudly, "that is a great devil more terrible than M'shimba-m'shimba, very fierce and terrifying, who eats up people, and I call this thing *Ewa*, which is death."

Bones shaded his eyes and looked steadily upward at the one standard that floated at the head of the staff.

He saw the big black cross on the white ground and the double-headed eagle with its clutching talons and nodded.

"*Ewa* which is called death," he repeated soberly, "I think you are wiser than you know, Buluta."

His automatic pistol cracked three times and at the third shot the rope that held the German Imperial Standard aloft was severed and the flag came fluttering down.

UPSIDE DOWN OR BACKWARDS

by W C Tuttle

Author of "Mary's Little Lamb," "With the Joker Wild," etc.

"WELL, she ain't changed an awful lot since I left," remarks Magpie Simpkins, as he cuddles his long legs up under his chin and tilts his chair against the side of the cabin.

"You can't expect no big changes in uh wilderness like this in thirty days," says I, and he nods emphatic like and spits at uh lizard.

"The East looks good, Ike," he proclaims.

"Did the East look good to you or did you look good to the East?" I asks. "Seems to me that you gets uh heap civilized in thirty days. What's the idea uh that hard hat?"

"Last word in head-gear, Ike," he states, picking the yaller, pot-shaped thing off the ground, and patting it affectionate like. "They calls 'em Darby hats. Did yuh notice that green and red shirt in my valise? I annexes that in Chicago, Ill., U. S. A., and she sure is uh humdinger. Got uh necktie pin in that valise, too, that only assessed me ten dollars and eighty-five cents, and nobody what never seen uh real diamond could tell the difference."

"Being as ignorance is bliss around here yuh may make uh hit, Magpie," I replies. "The fact that yuh hangs your person full uh Christmas tree ornaments don't lessen my hankering to hear yuh tell about how much capital yuh got interested in the Silver Threads."

Magpie Simpkins is Ike Harper's pardner, and I'm Ike Harper. We owns the Silver Threads mine, four burros, uh little grub and uh desire to find somebody with money to promote us.

Magpie's physique is impressing, unless yuh views him edgeways, when yuh can't get more'n uh glimpse. He's six feet several inches tall, wears uh kind look and uh long mustache, and has the ability to let me into more trouble than man is heir to.

When we gets nine hundred dollars' worth uh gold out of our placer mine on Plenty Stone Crick, Magpie gets the promoting itch. He orates that in the East is uh tribe uh philanthropists who spend their time hunting for uh shaft to sink their money in.

Also he opines that as uh hunter and finder uh this certain person he can't be beat or even tied. I protests audibly and often that we ought to let gold enough alone, but when Magpie gets an idea like that it's all off until he's proved that my objections were well founded.

Therefore and immediate he packs his valise—or rather one he borrows from Buck Masterson, the saloon-keeper at Piperock, and pilgrims East.

I holds down uh chair on the shady side

of our cabin for thirty days, and tries to figure out how long it will take 'em to get Magpie's nine hundred away from him. He indicates in his departing words that his stay is indefinite and his destination problematical, but he comes back on the thirtieth day.

He pilgrims up from Piperock, with the taste uh ashes in his mouth, uh yaller, hard hat on his head and kid gloves on his hands. I hands him uh welcome and uh cigaret, and he humps up in my chair.

"She's uh hard drag, Ike," he states. "The tribe I mentioned is either getting scarce or somebody has declared uh closed season on 'em. I invades Pittsburg and Chicago and other places too numerous to mention, but all I could find was folks who were kind enough to listen while they took uh drink on me. When the drink was gone they all lost their hearing, Ike."

"Did yuh expect to find capitalists in grog shops?" I asked, chiding like. "Moneyed men don't get drunk—they gets intoxicated. Didn't yuh do uh thing to be thankful for, Magpie?"

He shakes his head, sad-like, and fumbles in his pocket. After searching through all his clothes he comes back to the first pocket he looks in, where it was all the time and he knowed it, and pulls out uh letter.

"Ike, this is uh mystery," he proclaims. "Honest to grandma, I don't know what it means, but this letter says it was paid for and is on its way here. I didn't think I got so drunk that I bought anything except more drinks, but—well, take uh look at this."

He hands me the letter. At the top it proclaims to be from the Fur and Feathers Pet Shop, of Chicago. They orates that they handles each and everything what wears fur and feathers, and will supply same with cheer and great speed. The letter reads like this:

DEAR SIR:—

As per your request and purchase we are shipping you today one cassowary. This is a male, and, in case you desires uh female, we can secure you one inside of thirty days. Thanking you for past and future favors, we begs to remain—and so forth.

I hands the letter back to Magpie, and rolls uh smoke.

"The letter was waiting for me when I got here," he explains.

"You don't need to apologize, Magpie. How much did yuh pay for this male bird, beast or reptile?"

"That's what I don't know, Ike. I'm sorry."

"You always are, Magpie," says I. "You can be sorry more times, hand running, than any man I ever seen. You were born to sorrow. Some folks are born to sorrow, but some are like me—they has sorrow forced upon 'em. What'll we do with the danged thing?"

"How do I know?" he snaps at me. "Cassowary! What in —— is uh cassowary, Ike?"

"I ought to know!" I snaps right back at him. "You must uh been pretty blamed drunk, Magpie Simpkins."

He nods, solemn-like, and spits at uh lizard again:

"Maybe. That Eastern hooch is awful stuff, Ike. I don't remember no pet store. I must uh bought it the night I left Chicago for St. Louis. I wakes up in the morning and went to uh ticket office.

"Give me uh ticket to St. Louis," says I to the clerk.

"He looks queer like at me, and calls in uh policeman, and Ike, I had uh —— of uh time convincing that officer that I wasn't crazy. He explained to me that I'm already in St. Louis."

"Them policemen must be uh near-sighted bunch," says I. "You'd have uh nice time trying to prove that to an officer west uh Dakota."

"Don't chide me, Ike," says he. "I was uh stranger in uh strange land, and they took me in. Anyway I got uh green and red shirt, uh civilized hat and uh necktie pin to show for my trip."

"Don't forget Cassie," says I. "Didn't you talk mines uh-tall?"

"Uh-huh. There was uh fat bartender in Chicago who sympathized with me uh heap. Said he wished I'd uh showed up sooner with my proposition, cause he'd sunk all his money in uh new diving apparatus. He sure was uh good old scout, Ike. Dog-gone, that feller could fix up uh drink uh hooch until she tastes almost temperance, but she sure was uh sheep in wolf's clothes. I rode all the way from Chicago to St. Louis on three of 'em and didn't know it."

"The big question before the house is this, Magpie: is this here purchase uh yours uh singer, uh beast, uh burden or uh nuisance?"

"Must be uh useful utensil, Ike, or I'd never

bought it. I may get red-eyed from wobble water but I never loses my sense uh useful and ornamental things. I'm what you'd call uh discerning person—drunk or sober."

All uh which shows that there ain't no use arguing with Magpie Simpkins. He can do no wrong. Uh course he might do things that he'd be sorry for, but he never figures that he's wrong—just uh little mistaken for the time being.

"Come back broke?" I asks.

"Uh-huh. My gosh, Ike, I must uh spent money like uh timber Willie. If I knowed what that animile cost me I could figure how much the trip cost me."

"You don't have to let X equal the missing quantity, Magpie," says I. "You had nine hundred when yuh left, and you're broke now; therefore the trip cost me four hundred and fifty. Sabe?"

Magpie don't sleep well that night. First he has an argument with that Chicago bartender. Uh course, me being an innocent bystander or bylayer, I gets hit in the nose. I cautions him to fight the other way. He apologizes uh heap, but inside uh five minutes he starts another fight with some colored person over the way his bed is made and I gets pitched out of the bunk and hits my head on the stove.

I've been mistook for an Injun, and one time "Red River" Radkey absorbs too much of the fermented foam, and mistakes me for uh pink pollywog, but that's the first time that anybody ever mistook me for uh colored porter, and it makes me mad.

I climbs right back on that bunk, gets Magpie by the feet, and drags him around the yard in the moonlight. He's plumb awake and docile enough to apologize again when I finishes the third lap around the woodpile, so he climbs back on the bunk and I takes uh blanket and sleeps on the floor.

THE next morning we saddles our burros and starts for town. We're out uh spuds, and we needs some drill steel. Magpie leads the procession, setting on the rump of uh fuzzy-looking jackass. He's wearing that hard hat, green and red shirt—he sheds his vest—and on his hands he wears them gray gloves. He sure is uh thing to see. Even the burros acts bashful around him.

"I reckon I'll make the inhabitants uh Piperock set up and take notice," he states, admiring himself.

He sets the pot-shaped hat on the peak of his head, and brushes off that loco shirt with his gloves.

"Yes," says I. "All I hope is that they don't set up with uh gun in their hands. You sure look like uh cross between uh lodge-pole Christmas tree and uh zebra."

We pilgrims down to the main road, and ambles through the dust in the direction of Piperock. We comes to uh turn in the road, where we sees uh man setting alongside on uh rock. He's all humped up, with his head between his hands, and don't look up until I hails him. Then we recognizes him as being Chuck Warner, puncher for the Cross-J. I never did know just how to take that feller. He never growed none to speak of from his waist on down, and I figures that he's the honestest-looking liar I ever met. He sets there on that rock, sad-like, but when he sizes up our outfit his eyes gets bigger and he sort uh gasps:

"My ——! It must be true!"

"Too true," I replies, glancing at Magpie. "Too true."

He gets off the rock and wobbles over to us. His eyes are blood-shot, like he'd been dallying unduly with the cheerful fluid, and he squints at Magpie.

"It's Magpie Simpkins in disguise, Chuck," says I.

"Huh," says he, sort uh relieved like. "Maybe I ain't so bad as I thought. You fellers got time to help out uh pilgrim in doubt?"

"Your obedient servants," says I. "Lead us to the doubt."

He turns and ambles off across the country, and me and Magpie is right behind him. About two hundred yards from the road he stops and points across an open spot.

"That's my bronc," he states. "Yessir, that's my little hawse, but, but—say, what in —— is on that rope uh mine, eh?"

"Fluttering fool-hens!" explodes Magpie, fanning himself with his civilized hat.

I looks and swallers uh chaw uh natural leaf.

"Do—do you see it, too?" asks Chuck.

"Just exactly," states Magpie. "What is it?"

"If it ain't the granddaddy uh all blue grouse I'll eat my hat," orates Chuck. "Yuh see I been down to Piperock for three days, trying to bust Buck's wheel, and drink all the hooch in town. I comes along

the road this morning, singing merrily, when I happens to see that busted crate in the road. I pulls up to see what it is, and my bronc danged near dumps me off. He's scared at something in the brush, and when I spurs him over to see what it is, we scares out that blasted thing!

"Not being responsible for my actions I takes down my rope and proceeds to annex the thing. Between that thing and my bronc, they makes life miserable for me, so I gets off and leaves 'em to their fate. The rope is wound around the bush between 'em so they can't do nothing but stand there and contemplate each other."

"I don't reckon there's any doubt about it being uh grown bird," states Magpie, fussing with uh cigaret.

"Your perceptions are wide open, Magpie," nods Chuck. "Wonder where it flew from. It ain't no grouse nor yet it don't partake of any of the requirements of the fool-hen. It might uh been uh hummingbird about the time this here world was started."

"She's sure uh hummer," I agrees. "If I'd been born with uh neck like that I'd uh died from delirium tremens years ago."

"I'd opine that somebody done lost that crate off uh wagon, and maybe there's something around to tell what and whose it is," says Magpie.

We all pilgrims back to the road, and Chuck leads us to the busted bunch uh slats. On one side it says—

DO NOT TEASE.

On the other side, in letters uh foot high, it says—

MAGPIE SIMPKINS
PIPEROCK
MONTANA

We reads it over several times, and then Magpie steps back, cocks his yaller hat over one eye, sticks his thumbs in his belt and snorts—

"That is Cassie!"

"Make it Caspar," says I. "It's uh male cassowary, Magpie."

"Huh!" snorts Chuck. "You wise guys knowed all the time what it was, didn't yuh? What yuh going to do with the thing? What in —— is it anyway?"

"That thing, Chuck," says I, "is what uh man buys in the East when he's drunk up seven hundred dollars' worth uh mixed hooch. Cassowary is uh French word what means, 'something yuh bought when you're too drunk to consider the expense and necessity.' "

"I always did like the French language," states Chuck. "It sure is expressive that-away, 'cause yuh don't have to say much to mean uh whole lot. My mother was French. Name was Jones. Yuh pronounces it 'Hones,' the J being silent like the Q in cassowary."

"Well," says I, "we got to do something, and, being as it belongs to you, Magpie, I reckon yuh better suggest."

But Magpie sucks away on that cigaret, and shakes his head.

"I'd admire to hear all about it," states Chuck. "There must be uh deep and dark mystery about that bird, Magpie. If I knowed the details about that bird's past, maybe I could help yuh out."

Magpie is willing to receive help—as usual—so he sets down there and tells Chuck all about it—what he can remember.

"How much do yuh think yuh paid for it?" asks Chuck. "You sure ought to remember that part of it."

"Dang me if I know," replies Magpie. "Couple uh hundred, most likely. What yuh got on your mind, Chuck?"

"Say, what good is uh cassowary? If she was worth something to humanity we might peddle the blasted thing. If folks had an idea it was—cripes!"

"What's the exciting thought, Chuck?" I asks, but Chuck begins to roll uh fresh cigaret and grin to himself. Pretty soon he busts out laughing and slaps his quirt across his chaps.

"By cripes," he chuckles. "It won't cost nothing to try."

"Try what?" asks Magpie.

"Say, if you gets your two hundred back will yuh give me all I can make over that?"

"You answered your own question, Chuck," declares Magpie. "You get us two hundred for that overgrown fool-hen and you can have the rest. What yuh going to do?"

"That's my business, Magpie. You and Ike go along about your business, and don't peep—no matter what happens. Sabe? Here comes the stage."

Art Miller swings his four broncs around

in front of us, and looks us over, sort uh grouchy like.

"Howdy, Art," says Magpie. "What yuh doing these days—distributing poultry?"

Art spits over his off-wheeler, and considers the busted crate.

"Did yuh see what comes in that there box?" he asks, and we nods. "Did ye ever hear it crow?"

We all shakes our heads, and Art puts his hat on the brake lever and fumbles for his tobacco.

"Sounds like ——!" he snorts. "We was going along, sleepy like, when it crows. Runaway. Lost the crate out the wagon."

"Uh-huh," agrees Magpie. "Crate busted and canary flew."

"Canary!" Art spits out the word like he'd pulled uh slug from his old pipe. "Magpie Simpkins, you can get the dangdest things sent to you. What yuh going to use that thing for?"

"Art," says Chuck, chiding like, "you neglected your duty as uh stage-driver when yuh let that piece uh valuable freight get away."

"Well, go ahead and say it," replies Art, resigned like.

"Can you forget that you ever had that bird in your care?" asks Chuck.

"Audibly or mentally, Chuck?" asks Art.

"Audibly."

"I hope to some day."

"Be worth uh five spot, and no questions asked, Art."

"I never seen it," states Art. "What's the idea?"

"You fellers are as inquisitive as an old maid," replies Chuck. "All I asks is silence, and plenty of that. I'll pay the bills."

"We're as silent as the tomb, eh, Magpie?" says Art. "You ain't got nothing against me."

"Nothing but admiration, Art. Chuck, do what you please with that hooch-hen, and we'll go on to town. I don't sabe your play, young feller, but I'm for it all the way from the ace to the deuce."

We got our stuff at Piperock, and pilgrims right back home. The crate and bird are gone when we returns.

"I wish I knowed what Chuck aims to do?" says Magpie, as we goes past the spot.

"And bust up our chances to get back that two hundred," says I. "If you didn't hunger and thirst for information so hard, Magpie, I'd be living uh life uh ease right now. You always wants to monkey with the wheels uh progress."

ABOUT five days later "Scenery" Sims and "Dirty Shirt" Jones pilgrims up our way and stops to eat. They asks the usual questions and gets answered.

"Magpie, did yuh ever see uh railami?" asks Dirty Shirt.

"Uh-uh which?"

"Uh railami. Didn't yuh ever hear of one?"

"Oh, yes. I used to raise 'em."

"You did not!" squeaks Scenery "There's only one specimen left on earth today. Sabe?"

"Meaning you, I reckon, Scenery," says I. "You're the only specimen I ever seen that might fit that cognomen."

"No, not me!" snaps Scenery. "If yuh don't know and recognize one when yuh see it, maybe you'll wish yuh did."

There ain't much left to say, except unpleasant things, so they says "Klahowya" and departs.

"Railami," says Magpie, after they're gone. "Never heard the name before. The way Scenery pronounces it makes it sound like uh hare-lipped Piegan with hay fever trying to make uh noise like uh blowsnake."

"It can't be uh serious condition," I replies. "It sure can't amount to much if Scenery and Dirty Shirt knows what it is, so I ain't worrying about it none, Magpie."

The next day bringeth forth "Half Mile" Smith and "Tellurium" Woods. They rides in and partakes of bacon and beans.

"What you fellers doing up this way?" asks Magpie. "Seems like me and Ike is being honored lately. Scenery and Dirty Shirt was up to see us yesterday."

"Crazy as bedbugs, too," says I. "They was looking for—say, Magpie, what was that word?"

"Railami."

Half Mile and Tellurium looks foolish like at each other and then back at us.

"You know what it is?" asks Tellurium, but me and Magpie has to plead total ignorance.

"You looking for it, too, Tellurium?" I asks.

He rubs the bald spot on top of his head, and grins.

"Uh-huh. She's worth looking for."

"We hate to have to ask questions," I states.

"Worth uh thousand dollars," says Tellurium. "Uh cold thousand."

"So is sixty ounces uh gold, too, but that don't tell nothing but the value," orates Magpie. "Speak up, you're among friends."

"I wouldn't," states Half Mile. "No use letting everybody in on it, Tellurium. If they don't know about it we hadn't ought to lessen our chances by telling."

We thanks 'em heartily for the information, and they rides away. Magpie gets out his dictionary and ponders deep like over it, but shakes his head.

"It ain't in the book, Ike. Must be uh foreign substance."

The next day comes old Judge Steele and Ricky Henderson. They salutes us, and gets off to rest their saddles.

"How's law and justice, Judge?" asks Magpie. "You fellers hunting for uh railami?"

"Huh!" snorts the judge, like he didn't hear, and glances at Ricky.

"Railami," repeats Magpie.

"Why—uh—you seen any?" asks the judge.

"I've quit drinking, Judge," says Magpie. "I'm sure I'd uh seen one next, and I tapers off just in time."

"Well, well!" exclaims the judge. "Ricky, I reckon me and you had better be going on. We're looking for uh couple uh strays. Two red cows. Seen anything of 'em up here, Magpie?"

We disclaims all credit for seeing two red cows, and they departs.

"Somebody's uh heap crazy around here, Ike," states Magpie. "Either they're crazy to look for uh thing with uh name like that, or we're crazy for not looking. Let's me and you go over on Roaring Crick tomorrow and do uh little gophering on that quartz seam. Maybe we'll meet uh railami on the trail, eh?"

Me and Magpie gets enthusiastic over the way that quartz seam shows up, and when we leaves there we're out uh grub. Magpie suggests that we pilgrims to Piperock and get uh banquet uh ham and aigs, and I'm right with him, so we points our burros toward town.

Magpie is still wearing that yaller hard hat. The burro he's riding turns its head once in uh while and looks back. It sizes him up, shakes its ears, sad like, and pilgrims on. Magpie sure is dressed up like uh plush horse, and all he needs is uh cane to be uh cripple for life.

There seems to be uh certain degree of excitement in Piperock, when we arrives. Chuck Warner is setting on his bronc out there in the middle of the street, and he's surrounded with uh crowd. Lying down in the dusty road is that blasted bird that Magpie bought, and uh rope runs from Chuck's saddle to its long neck. The bird seems to be the coolest thing in town.

"What do yuh reckon to do with it, Chuck?" asks Dirty Shirt, and everybody seems interested.

"Danged if I know," replies Chuck. "I ain't never seen nothing like it before. It just comes busting along down the road, and I hangs my rope on it. Wish I knowed what she is."

"How much do yuh want for it, Mister Warner?" asks Judge Steele, looking the critter over, and fumbling in his pocket.

"You don't want it, do yuh, Judge?" laughs Masterson. "You couldn't eat it."

"I don't know what she's worth, Judge," states Chuck. "Ain't she some whopper of uh piece uh poultry? What do yuh reckon she's worth?"

"I'll give yuh ten dollars for it," squeaks Scenery Sims. "I'd give uh ten just to own uh thing like that."

"The —— yuh would!" snorts Half Mile. "I'll give fifteen."

"Fifteen — fifteen — fifteen," chants Chuck. "Who'll give twenty?"

"I'll make it twenty," yells Ricky Henderson.

"Poultry's going up!" whoops Chuck, standing up in his stirrups.

"Who'll give Ricky uh raise?"

"I makes it worth thirty," states the judge.

"Forty!" yelps Tellurium.

"Whoa!" whoops Chuck. "Wait uh minute. What's the idea uh getting all heated up over uh overgrown fool-hen on stilts. First thing we knows there'll be sorrow in our city. I got uh good scheme. I'll make a hundred tickets at five dollars each, and raffle the blamed thing. You fellers can gamble your heads off if yuh feels inclined."

That seems to suit the crowd, so Chuck puts the bird in Buck Masterson's stable, and him and some of the rest gets busy on making tickets.

Me and Magpie sets there on the sidewalk and wonders what them Jaspers want of that bird. Art Miller comes over, but he don't know any more than we do.

"How comes it that everybody covets that monstrosity, Art?" I asks, but Art shakes his head, and digs his toes in the dirt.

"Danged if I know, Ike. I never seen folks so crazy before. I felt that there's something in the wind for several days. Tellurium, Half Mile, Scenery, Ricky, Dirty Shirt and Judge Steele has been in conference several times up in the judge's office. Here comes Tellurium. Maybe he'll tell us what it means."

TELLURIUM sets down with us for uh minute, and then gets up and turns around three times, like uh losing gambler does to change his luck.

"I'd admire to know what you wants that freak bird for, Tellurium?" states Art.

"You would, eh?" chuckles Tellurium, hauling some pieces uh paper out of his pocket, and putting 'em into another. "You would, eh? Don't you know, Art?"

"I wouldn't ask if I did."

Tellurium fusses around in his inside pocket, and hauls out uh piece uh writing-paper.

"I reckon the tickets are all sold now, so it won't do no harm to let yuh know," says he, handing Art the paper. "I done invested seventy-five on my luck, but I reckon you fellers are too late to even buy one ticket. When I left Judge Steele and Half Mile was quarreling over who gets the last number. Read that letter and be sorry yuh didn't buy no chances. We don't know who it was written to, but we figures that it was some uh them citified prospectors what was through here uh short time ago. We found it on the floor in Buck's place, and that's what brought us up to your place that day, Ike."

The three of us groups there on the sidewalk and reads what is left of that epistle. The top and one corner is torn off, but that is how she reads from that on down:

—little information. Some geologist friends of mine were down in that country last Summer, and they brought me the track of a bird—dried in alkali mud. The measurements and peculiar arrangement of the toes show it to be the track of a Railami, a bird that is believed to have been extinct for many years. The imprint is of recent times—not over six months—and without a doubt, in the vicinity of the town of Piperock lives and roams a specimen of this rare bird. It greatly resembles an ostrich in size and characteristics, but as there are no ostriches in that country, it would be difficult to mistake anything else for this rare bird. I would be willing to give one thousand dollars for this specimen alive, and will gladly welcome any information you can send me. Very truly yours,

C. Ewein Church, New York, N. Y.

"My ——!" snorts Magpie. "Here we've had uh thousand dollars running loose around here and didn't know it. Ain't that the limit?"

"Just uh case of grasping an opportunity when she comes your way," chuckles Tellurium, looking at his tickets again. "Some of us are wide awake around here."

"Uh-huh," I agrees. "As far as I'm concerned I tries to get my regular sleep."

Tellurium pilgrims back across the street, and pretty soon we opines that we might as well go and see what's doing, so we enters Buck's place. Chuck leads the bird in, and ties it to uh leg of the pool-table. The bird squats down on the floor, and Chuck mounts uh chair.

"Gents," says he, yelling for order. "We are gathered together here to raffle off uh bird that nobody seems to know nothing about. I puts my rope on it and, being it don't show no brand, I claims it as mine. Am I right?"

"According to law, Chuck," admits the judge.

"Being all things is so we will proceed to raffle off said bird. Gents, will the first number out of the hat win the bird or will we draw more before the lucky number comes to view?"

"Make it three draws," squeaks Scenery. "Third number out wins."

The bunch seems satisfied, so Chuck takes up the hat with the numbers in, and begins to shake 'em up.

"Who will do the drawing?" asks the judge. "We got to have this all according to law."

"You can't, Judge," states Tellurium. "You got too many chances. Let's get somebody what ain't got no interest. Let Ike Harper do it."

I didn't want to be mixed up in the thing uh-tall, but uh feller can't refuse uh simple request like that, so I moves into position.

"Let her go, Ike," squeaks Scenery. "If you draws my number I'll make you uh present of uh calf."

"Just uh minute!" yells the judge. "That sounds to me like he was trying to bribe or coerce the drawee. Scenery, you keep your mouth shut. I'd be willing to make Mister Harper uh present of uh calf if he drawed my number, but I ain't proclaiming it."

I reaches up twice and tears up the two numbers that I draws.

"This one tells the tale," says somebody, excited like, as I pulls it out and hands it to Chuck.

He unfolds it and squints hard at the number, turning it around and around.

"Number—uh—say, Ike, what number is that?"

"Looks like uh sixteen to me," says I, and Scenery whoops:

"That's mi-i-i-i-ine! I got sixte-e-e-e-e-en! Whooe-e-e-e-e!"

"Wait uh minute!" howls Chuck. "Maybe I was wrong, Ike, but take uh look at it the other way. If that ain't uh nine——"

"That's mine!" whoops Dirty Shirt. "Dog-gone, I knowed——"

"Looks like ninety-one," says I.

"My number! My number," whoops the judge. "Ninety-one wins!"

The judge comes clawing his way to the front, and the whole crowd starts milling around me.

"Ouch!" yelps Ricky, above the noise. "Let loose! Wow! That danged pelican bit me on the leg!"

"I claims that bird," yells the judge. "Lead her out to me, Ricky."

"Like —— he will!" howls Scenery, climbing up on the bar, and shaking his number under the judge's nose. "Just because you misrepresents the law, Judge, it don't give yuh no rights to take property away from honest men."

"Let's live in peace and harmony," states Buck Masterson, sliding his double-barreled shotgun across the bar, and covering the crowd. "Everybody shut up and listen to me! Look at the tickets in the hat and maybe yuh can settle this argument."

"Your wisdom is to be applauded, Buck," says Chuck. "Sheath that cemetery promoter, and we'll rest easier and think clearer. Ricky, give me that hat with the tickets in."

"Where's your danged hat?" asks Ricky, down on his hands and knees under the table. "If it was down here—let loose, you cross between uh Shanghai rooster and uh giraffe! Huh!"

Ricky's hand comes up over the table-top, and produces one square of white paper.

"Your hat's still here, Chuck, but that danged bird has ate up all the tickets except that number thirteen. I took that away from him and—ouch! Yuh will, will yuh!"

"*Biff! Coo-oo-orlook.*"

Ricky must uh kicked that bird for getting familiar, 'cause it comes right up into our midst with dangerous intent written on its countenance.

I LOVE birds. Maw used to have uh canary, and I cried when it passed out. I got uh lot uh feathered friends, and I never met uh bird before that even attempted to kick me. I don't think that thing was uh bird in the first place. I'd call it uh cross between uh mean disposition and uh piledriver, 'cause it kicked Ike Harper, Esq., right where he wears his pancakes. Ike Harper immediate and soon skids across the floor and plays uh billiard off Judge Steele and Buck Masterson, and finishes up by holing out under uh chair.

I peeks out from my ambush and observes that alleged bird leave that low grog-shop with Scenery hanging on to its neck and Dirty Shirt hold of its tail. Somebody must uh cut that rope. The rest of the audience, except me and Buck and the judge, follers in the rear.

I must uh hit Buck and the judge pretty hard. Buck has got uh cut over his eye where he bumped against the bar on his way down, and the judge fell between the bar and the rail, with his feet under the rail.

I hauls the judge around so his back is against the bar, with the rail across his lap, and folds his hands. Then I helps Buck into uh chair, where he sets and makes funny little noises.

"Railami," states the judge, without opening his eyes.

"*Z-z-z-zunkuff*," says I.

"*Uf-uf-uf-fuf*," says Buck.

It sure was an intelligible conversation. It was just about sensible enough for uh gathering like that and we all enjoyed it. Sudden like the noise starts percolating

down the street again, and I starts for the door. I said I "started," and that's as far as I got. Pete Gonyer's pet coyote pup must uh wanted uh railami, too, and it wasn't below its dignity to come right into uh saloon to get it either.

In they comes, crowding each other for first place, and starts making a three-ring circus out uh Buck's place. I'd tell uh man that there was something going on in there. That stilt-legged, overgrown fool-hen sure can cut circles, and that pup ain't no slouch either. All outdoors seems to beckon that bird, but he don't sabe mirrors. He cuts his last lap about two feet in the lead of that pup, hops high, wide and handsome to the top of the bar and meets itself in Buck's bar-mirror.

Bounce? Say, that bird simply turns over in the air and comes back like uh rubber ball. The coyote is yelping its fool head off, trying to climb the bar, when that mass uh feathers and legs hits him dead center on the rebound.

Scenery Sims is just staggering in the door when that pup opines he can hear his maw calling him, and he tangles with poor little Scenery on his way out. Scenery loses his feet, so, as long as he ain't got no visible means of support, he sets down on the back of his neck, and that demented thing that Magpie bought meets its original owner right in the doorway and they goes into the street together.

"Six-te-e-e-e-en!" shrieks Scenery, clawing at his head, where it had banged against uh chair-leg.

"Ninety-one," croaks the judge, clawing at the bar-rail across his lap.

"Pass," declared Buck, vacant like, and just then "Doughgod" Smith weaves in.

He looks us over, foolish like, squints hard at the judge, under the rail, and then shakes his head and starts for the door.

"What's the matter, Dud-Dud-Dough-god?" stutters Buck.

"De-de-de-delirium tut-tut-tut-tremens," stutters Doughgod, right back at him.

He flops his arms, and sighs deep.

"No use," he states. "Must be uh lot uh lye in hooch that'll make uh feller see things like that. It was standing down the road with its head under uh hard hat—uh yaller one!" He shrieked the last sentence, and lopes out to his bronc, and away he goes.

"Head under uh hat!" whoops Scenery. "My ——! Hid out like uh ostrich!" And then he lopes out of the door.

"I got uh claim to settle, too," announces the judge.

He slides out from under that rail, hitches up his belt and gallops after Scenery.

Magpie ambles in the door, snorts the dust out of his nose, and Chuck Warner is right behind him. Chuck looks like he'd been through a revolution. He weaves over to the pool-table, gets down on his knees and searches the floor. He shakes his head, solemn like, and searches his pockets once more.

Pretty soon he gets back on his feet and wobbles up to the bar.

"Buck, you got any caster ile?" he asks. "I had all that raffle money in my pocket, and I reckon that danged cross between uh greyhound and uh duck must uh ate it up with them tickets. I can't find nothing but uh five-dollar bill in my pocket."

"Let's see the bill, Chuck," says Buck, and Chuck hands it to him.

"Thanks," says Buck. "It ain't much but it will help to pay for that glass."

"Dog-gone yuh, Buck!" wails Chuck, leaning against the bar, "that bird ain't mine. It lays between Scenery Sims and Judge Steele."

"The —— it does!" squeaks Scenery from the doorway. "That bird is too active to lay."

He walks over to Magpie, and slams that yaller hat down over his head until his ears stand out like sails.

"Take your danged pot hat, Magpie!" he snaps. "Nobody ought to wear uh hat like that. Will some strong unwounded man go out and bring in the judge? He took that thousand-dollar bird, beast or reptile by the leg while I takes the hat off its head. I'd uh carried him in but I ain't able to do much. I suppose I got to own that bird."

"Don't worry too much about it, Scenery," advises Buck. "If the judge opines that his number wins you got to fight it out among yourselves. If the judge don't survive I reckon he's got an heir some place to take it up."

"Air ——!" squeaks Scenery. "He was trying to get some when I left. That thing can give uh mule high, low and the game and win."

Just then in comes the judge, with Tellurium, Half Mile and Dirty Shirt

helping to support him. They sets him in uh chair and he droops like uh wilted lily.

"How do yuh feel, Judge?" I asks.

"Paralyzed from the belt-line both ways, Ike," says he, painful like. "I don't reckon the shadder uh death is afar off. I sure have had particular —— kicked out uh me this day and date."

"How about your claim to that bird now, Iudge?" squeaks Scenery. "I'll fight it——"

"Go to it," wheezes the judge. "I'll pay half your funeral expenses. I hereby waives all claim to said monstrosity, and grieves to think I ever coveted such uh piece uh property."

"I'll take it!" whoops Scenery. "I'll——"

"With certain formalities, Scenery," states Tellurium, wise like, producing uh piece uh paper and unfolding same. "This here proclamation was picked up this day in the street of Piperock, and unless I've forgot all the botany I ever learned in school we been bidding on the wrong bird. You might pe-ruse it, Scenery."

He looks at me and Magpie, and hands the letter to Scenery. I leans close enough to see that it's the letter that Magpie got announcing the shipment from the Fur and Feathers Pet Shop. Scenery spells it out, with uh squeak after each word.

"Cassowary," he snorts at Tellurium, and then he turns appealing like to Magpie: "You ain't going to send for another one are you? Honest, yuh ain't, are yuh, Magpie?"

"*Ker-boom! Ker-bang!*"

THE house shakes with the concussion and Buck drops uh glass he's been polishing for ten minutes. He looks under the bar, and gasps—

"My riot-gun!"

We sets there and looks at each other for uh minute, and then the judge runs his fingers painful like through his hair, and orates in uh peevish, wailing tone—

"Well, dang it all, send for uh doctor or uh coroner."

Somebody starts to get both when the door flies open and in walks Chuck. He ambles the length of the room and slams the shotgun down on the bar.

"——!" he snorts, "I shot its crop all to ——!"

"Is—is it dead?" quavers the judge.

"I don't know, Judge," replies Chuck, weary like. "It was when I left."

"What'd yuh shoot it for?" asks Scenery.

"It ate up all that raffle money—dang its hide! Now, I shot the treasury all to flinders."

"Raffle money!" snorts Tellurium. "Did anybody pay yuh cash, Chuck? I know danged well I didn't. I just signed your paper for it."

Chuck looks blank like for uh minute, feels of his head, and snorts:

"Cripes! I sure must uh been kicked hard. Where's Ricky?"

"Right here," chirps Ricky. "What yuh want?"

"Where's that piece uh paper I gave yuh just before the raffle started?"

"Piece uh—oh, that piece. Gosh! Was that worth anything, Chuck? I remember you handing it to me, and telling me to put it in my pocket, but I thought yuh was joshing. Well, I was standing over there by that shotgun, after Buck puts it back on the bar, and unless I'm mistaken I sort uh absent-minded like shoved it into the muzzle uh that gun. I'm sorry——"

"You're welcome," states Chuck, offhand like. "It looks to me like I'd shot the business all to —— with the profits. I lose eleven dollars and four cents on the deal."

"What I want to know is this: is that bird critter still in the land of the living?" interrupts Scenery Sims.

"What I want to know is—has somebody got some liniment?" states the judge, and then me and Magpie and Chuck goes outside.

"Ain't it awful?" complains Chuck. "The goose that was going to lay the golden aig is dead, and your two hundred is all shot to pieces."

"Just because uh sixteen upside down is ninety-one," agrees Magpie. "How do yuh figure you're out eleven dollars and four cents?"

"I gave uh five spot to Art for holding his tongue, and Buck took uh five for the busted looking-glass. Sabe? That's ten. The dollar I had to pay uh feller in Great Falls for writing that scientific letter, one dollar, and it cost me postage both ways. She totals up to eleven dollars and four cents, Magpie."

"Say, Chuck, where did yuh invent the name 'Railami' for that bird?"

"Spell it backward, Ike," says he.

"You are," states Magpie.

A Shift into Reverse

by Roy P Churchill

Author of "Danny Takes a Chance," "The Welding," etc.

"THIS Dugan is ruinin' the second division. Somebody oughter make him lay off. That poor bunch of long-timers show about as much pep when he's through with 'em as a charge of black powder that's been overboard. What ails him?"

"Slim" Higgins was speaking. He and Dick Reasoner were stopping their scrub-and-wash clothes on the line. The decks of the United States Training-Ship *Dixie* were still half dark, and the long line of wet clothing which would be triced up before sunup, hid another man near enough the two to overhear. This man stooped under the line and faced Slim Higgins.

"What's it to you?" he growled menacingly. "Any old time you want to butt in on my business, hop to it. You and any other stool-pidgeoning rate that's looking for trouble."

This was Cain Dugan. A burly, thick-chested, boatswain's mate who had taken the paid-off Billy Yonts' place at the last home-coming of the ship. He turned from Higgins to Reasoner, for while he had successfully cowed the leaders and the men of the other divisions, he had been unable to fathom this tall, slow-moving, even-tempered master-at-arms.

"Well!" he demanded, thrusting forward his heavy black-bearded jaw and doubling his fists until the muscle-corded arms ridged into knotty lumps. "This signal-stick asked you a question. I'm waiting for the answer."

It was Dugan's boast that he did not fear God, man or devil, and the manner of his life bore out his statement, for he and the devil were cronies, he did not know God, and he was a master of men.

Reasoner laughed easily. Laughed in the other's face as calmly, as much without anger and without fear as if it was his every-day job to be threatened.

"Don't get excited, Dugan," he said. "If you care to listen, I'll go on and tell Slim what he wants to know."

Dugan relaxed. Sooner or later he would get a chance at this fellow, but this did not seem the time.

"Go on," he said sullenly.

"You're too hard on the recruits. Every officer on the ship knows it, but they are hoping you'll improve."

"I know you tattled everything aft," interrupted Dugan.

Reasoner ignored him. This was rank insult to an enlisted man, but no one had yet been able to stampede Dick Reasoner, and a man of Dugan's stamp should have known better than to try. When Reasoner

was ready, he would act, and all the Dugans in the world could not make him lose his head.

"You are not apt to improve," he continued, "but I want to give you a little warning. That second division itself is the thing you want to look out for. You can't drive a bunch of youngsters like that too far. They will kick back in the end. That's the comfort I wanted to give Slim, and I'm glad you could hear it."

"What'll we call it?" scoffed Dugan. "This whole ship's company act like a lot of Sunday-school teachers. One real he-man in the bunch is treated as a freak. That gang of sissies in my division haven't enough real manhood to animate a jelly-fish. Me afraid of them! Why I could pierce all their noses and make 'em wear rings in 'em."

Reasoner had finished what he had to say. He turned from Dugan and began to get his things together. Dugan ducked under the line and a few minutes later had crowded one of his division from a favored place at the line and began to hang up his clothes.

As Slim Higgins and Reasoner went aft to other duties Slim's unspoken question was answered by his companion.

"He's a tough nut, Slim. You're wondering why I took the guff I did, but a fist-fight won't cure that fellow. He's used to that. He'd put up an awful scrap, and even if I could best him, would still browbeat his division as bad as ever. I have looked him up in the book. The word is 'bide' and it means to suffer and wait for. That second division will not stand for the treatment he gives them, and sooner or later its time will come. That's why I'm waiting; maybe it'll help Dugan."

"The only way you can cure a man like that is to shoot him with a bird gun at three paces," said Slim. "I know you always dodge a fight until the last minute, but you are goin' to have to lick this Dugan or he licks you pretty *pronto*."

"Dictionary" Dick shook his head. He was opposed to violence. The little worn dictionary which he kept in his sea-chest and sometimes in his blouse, carried many solutions besides "fight." To settle a vexed question he looked for an answer in the book. "Everything's in it," was one of his favorite retorts to criticism. "All you have to do is to find the right word." And his shipmates on the *Dixie* had long since ceased to hold lightly the advice he gave. Somehow things had a way of working out as Reasoner said, and the officers turned over to him many strange problems among the recruits which the training on the *Dixie* was to make fit for places in the big fleet.

And Dictionary Dick usually found a way out. In this case it was a petty officer who was causing trouble. Like a happy family the ship's company of the *Dixie* had taken on draft after draft of recruits, had worked together, molding and fitting them for duty, until Billy Yonts, chief petty-officer of the second division, was paid off and Dugan had come to take his place.

"The second division is falling behind," complained the first lieutenant. "What's the trouble, Dugan?"

This was a week after the conversation at the wash-line. The men were lined up for inspection, and the second had showed up poorer than usual in the morning drill. It had been "away all boats," and the division had failed to provide all their equipment, had rowed raggedly, and had not kept up in the evolutions. The men were nervous and full of false movements and the vicious string of commands from Dugan made them worse instead of better.

"They're a bunch of quitters, sir," said Dugan, putting all the contempt that he could into the words and making them loud enough so that all the division heard.

"You're here to help train the men, not find fault with them," spoke the first lieutenant sharply. "Find out the cause, and correct it."

This Dugan proceeded to do in his own way. The division had no rest from him. More than half the men went on the report for trivial infractions of the rules and all went about their tasks jerkily. At the next inspection they had not improved, and their nervousness had given place to a sullen resentment at all authority in general and to Cain Dugan in particular. The first lieutenant sent for Dugan.

"Your division is not improving," he said severely. "They haven't been going ahead since Yonts was paid off, and now they are going back. Is it you or the men?"

"Yonts babied them too much, sir," said Dugan. "They're spoiled, but give me time, and I'll break them."

The first lieutenant shook his head.

"I don't know about that. Maybe you are too hard on them. Try easing up."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Dugan, with as much anger as he dared, and from then on drove the division harder than ever.

AGAIN it was early morning, and the men were stopping their clothes on the line. Little Bryan Weber of the second had crept out of his hammock half an hour early, and had just finished up a big wash. At the line Dugan shoved him aside and took his place—a place forward where the wet clothing was in no danger of swinging against the stays and being soiled. This was not the first time that little Weber had been roughly handled by Dugan. The other times he had been afraid to resent it, but now after weeks of bad treatment he could stand it no longer, and revolted.

"Get out of my place," he cried shrilly, "I was there first."

Dugan paid no attention. With his back turned he was impudently unconscious of the other.

Bryan Weber was small and slight, and had come into the Navy with the hard-won consent of his parents when he was barely seventeen, but he was manly and studious, and under the tutelage of Billy Yonts had made good progress. Dugan had taken a special dislike to him, and continually gave him the worst end of all the watches and lookouts.

Robbed of his place and ignored, Weber was beside himself with rage and humiliation, and Cain Dugan had the surprise of his bullying life when the boy charged, striking blindly with both fists.

"Why you little devil," said Dugan. "Haven't I taught you anything yet?" and he struck with one of his big fists.

The boy whirled dizzily, and fell backward across the deck at the feet of Dick Reasoner. Dugan followed and raised his foot to kick him where he lay stunned. The foot was bare, but a sailor's bare, tough toes are not the ineffectual weapons of a shoe-wearing man.

"That'll do," said Reasoner, stepping over the boy, and facing the angry Dugan.

"For you, yes. But it won't do for me. Out of the way, or I'll paste you."

Reasoner did not answer. Behind him Bryan Weber crawled to his feet and lurched unsteadily away across the deck. Dugan started after him.

"That'll do," repeated Reasoner sharply. His tone was commanding, and the words those of a man who expected to be obeyed. Dugan took the challenge.

"We might as well settle it now," he said. "You've butted in once too often into my business."

Both men were barefoot, and faced each other across a length of wet deck, slippery with soap from the clothes-scrubbing. They wore undershirts and trousers, and in the half light of the early morning were safe from interference from aft.

Cain Dugan had won his many rough-and-tumble fights by bull rushes and his ability to stand punishment. He was not ignorant of the finer rules and science of boxing, but chose to ignore them for a freer display of his brute strength. His game was to tear his opponent down, overwhelm his defense, trample him under foot. Without further warning he drove in, striking wickedly.

Reasoner met the attack unexpectedly. Other men had always given way before Dugan's vicious rush. It was to be expected that this rather slow and reluctant opponent would do the same, but Dick Reasoner was no longer slow. His body stiffened as if the material in him had been suddenly tempered into spring steel. His long loose-jointed frame drew into itself, became compact, finely knit, a working unit of perfectly coordinated parts. Dugan's rush met a swifter one from the made-over Reasoner. Before his adversary could gather momentum he had landed two punishing blows where they would do the most good. Dugan shook his head sideways to offset the shock, and stepped back. His charge had been ruined by this quick counter attack.

Reasoner gave him no rest, no chance to draw breath. All the half-forgotten science that he had ignored, Dugan used for defense, and all his wonderful store of strength he called on to withstand the shower of blows. As he fought he threatened and abused, but the silent Reasoner met all his rushes with swifter attacks and continued to lash out blows that Dugan at first ignored, and then came to dread.

"It does my heart good to see old Dictionary Dick in action," said Slim Higgins to the group that surrounded the two men.

"Dugan had it in his head that he was boss of the ship. I guess this'll throw a crimp into him. Dick's wearin' him out."

Dugan realized at last that he was getting the worst of the fight. It made him furious, and he began to use his head. Covering up as best he could, he saved his strength for another rush. It was getting lighter, and by Reasoner's side was a spot of soapy deck. He maneuvered to get Reasoner on it.

Slim Higgins saw the danger.

"Look out for the soap to the left, Dick," he called. "He's workin' you over to it."

The warning came too late. Dugan rushed with all the power of his carefully hoarded strength. Reasoner slipped on the soap and went down. Before he could get up, Dugan had leaped at his prostrate body, feet first. What he meant to do was to put Reasoner out by jumping on him with his one hundred and eighty pounds. Reasoner squirmed aside, and as Dugan tried again, lay face up on the deck.

"Shame! Let him get up!" cried those watching.

A Navy fist-fight has one clearly defined rule. There are no rounds, but when a man is down, the other man must let him get to his feet before he attacks again.

The interference was unnecessary in this case. As Dugan jumped Reasoner struck upward with his feet, catching Dugan in the stomach. It was a blow delivered with all the tense strength of Reasoner's powerful body from the hunched shoulders and neck braced by the deck, up through the muscular back and legs to the balls of his hard feet. Dugan grunted as they struck him, and his weight sagged down inertly over Reasoner, who with another heave threw him backward to the deck. Dugan did not get up.

"The word is '*cul-de-sac*'," said Reasoner, getting up slowly and assuming his usual drawl. "I looked it up last week. It means when you are hemmed in and no way out but to fight."

Cain Dugan did not mend his ways with the second division. He recognized no power but force, and while he respected Reasoner, he felt that no other man on the ship had a right to consideration, but even under his increased driving the division began to improve in its work.

"How do you account for it?" asked Slim. "Dugan is about as bad as ever with his bunch, but they're doin' better. They're snappier in the drills and don't look so hopeless."

"They are beginning to see that Dugan isn't invincible," said Reasoner. "Their self-respect is returning. Half a dozen of them will be getting together and giving him a licking, some shore leave, and it is his own doing, for he's driving the lesson into them every day that might is right."

"Is that dope in the book?"

"The word is 'rebellion'. I've just finished telling you what it means."

"Here's a good one," said Slim, "and it fits the case: 'Oh why should the head of a mortal be bone?' 'Batty' McGinnis sprung it on me when he was watchin' this Dugan makin' it hard on the Weber kid, and Batty told me something else. He's been shipmates with Dugan before. When Dugan was paid off on his first cruise he married and intended to stay on the outside, but in six months or less he was back worse than ever. His wife couldn't put up with his ways, and she divorced him for cruelty. He's a bad hombre. I hope the division gives it to him good when they do get a chance."

"You say he's making it hard for little Weber?"

"Yes, makin' him scrub clothes for him, and soakin' him all the extra duty he dares, but he hasn't got the kid bluffed, even if he thinks he has him crawlin' in the dust. Just as you say, he's waitin' a chance and lettin' Dugan think he's a willin' slave until he gets a poke at him. He slipped me this news, too. He found a letter in one of Dugan's pockets when he was washin' out a suit. He read it and then threw it overboard. It was from Dugan's wife tellin' him she was married again, and to stop writin' threatenin' letters, or she would turn 'em over to the police."

JUST after the mid-watch came on, two nights after Slim and Reasoner had talked over Dugan's case and the second division, the radio man on watch caught a message which made him send a messenger-boy hurrying to the officer of the deck. That officer woke the first lieutenant, and after a few minutes' investigation the captain was called. The passenger steamer *Senator* was afire, and the fire was beyond control of the crew.

Being forward, the ship was afraid to run into the wind toward shore on account of fanning the flames aft, and they were asking for help.

The *Dixie* was a bare hundred miles away, and the nearest other ship was three times that. It was up to the training-ship. The *Senator* carried a big passenger-list, and a good part of her cargo was ammunition. When the *Dixie* picked her up, she asked that rescue hurry, as the passengers were demanding to be allowed to take to the boats, which the officers refused to do, as long as the *Senator* could steam backward toward land, and there was a chance of getting control of the fire.

The *Dixie* answered that she was coming at full speed, and the final word from the *Senator* was that the fire was gaining, and there would be barely time to get the passengers to safety before the ammunition would be in danger. She had changed her course, and was running toward the *Dixie*, with the offshore wind on her beam.

"We will sight her before daylight," said the captain. "We are making eighteen knots and she about fifteen. That will give us about three hours. Let the crew sleep for two of them, and then call the Fire and Rescue Party."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the first lieutenant. "The boat's crews will need all the rest they can get. I would suggest, sir, that I have the cooks called so the men may have their breakfast before they are called away."

Lighting up the sky just as the dawn was lighting the east, the lookouts caught their first glimpse of the burning ship. An angry red glow, topped with smoke, almost hid her forward decks. The wireless was silent. Half an hour before the office had been burned out, and the last message had been "Hurry!"

Mustered around the *Dixie's* decks were the members of the Fire and Rescue Party. Most of the men who were to handle the boats with the boarding party were from the second division, and Cain Dugan was in charge. The other divisions were casting off the securing lines, and getting their own boats provided and ready to rig out.

"Get them all ready," was the first lieutenant's order. "The *Senator's* boats will be overloaded and some of them are too far forward to use."

As the ships drew nearer together the *Senator* stopped her engines and began to lower her after boats. The sea was smooth and the launching not difficult.

"Do not overload the boats," signaled the *Dixie*. "We will use ours to supplement yours."

It was soon light enough to see the men and women lining the after rails of the ship, and the groups around the boats.

The *Dixie* was now close in, and as soon as her way was stopped the order came, "Away Fire and Rescue Party!" The first men went in the two lifeboats with only the regular crew and hospital steward. The cutters and launches would follow, and some of them carry the artificers, portable extinguisher detail, and artificial breathing apparatus. The first boats were to rescue the lives and the others to fight the fire, if it were feasible.

Running alongside the burning ship the boats filled to capacity and returned to the *Dixie*, then went back for another load. It was hard, exciting work. The passengers came first, some of them cool, some half-hysterical, most of them insisting on bringing their baggage. The *Dixie's* men mingled with the crew of the *Senator*, lifting children and women into the boats, comforting the frightened, keeping back the cowardly able-bodied who pushed forward for first places.

Cain Dugan had returned for his second load. The *Senator's* boats and those from the *Dixie* had thinned out the passengers. Dugan was his usual self. On his first trip he had quarreled with a sailor from the *Senator*, and knocked the man down when he sought to take a place in the boat.

"Get out," he said harshly. "We'll get you in plenty of time."

But the man came on, and Dugan struck him. Not until then did he see that the man was badly burned.

"Served him right," he growled. "Shovin' in. Why didn't he say he was hurt?"

"You didn't give him time," expostulated the hospital steward. "I intend to report you for it."

All this had not improved Dugan's temper. On the way over he had abused his crew for slowness, when they were rowing as if in a race, for the fact that they were taking part in a rescue, and that the fire might reach the ammunition on the *Senator* and blow her up at any

minute, was stimulation enough for the youngsters. Until Dugan railed at them, they had forgotten how they hated him.

Alongside the *Senator* a few passengers and a part of the crew who had been relieved from the fire-fighting, came into the boat at once, but when there was still room for half a dozen more, they stopped coming. Dugan stepped out of the boat and ran up the ship's gangway to the deck. He wanted to get a full load before he shoved off.

A man met him at the top. He wore no hat, his face was scorched, his eyes red.

"Help!" he cried, in a voice full of anxiety.

"Shut up yappin'," ordered Dugan. "You grown men give me a pain, actin' like a lot of babies."

"My wife," explained the man, resenting the other's tone, "not me. I want help to get her up from below."

"Where below?"

"Don't stand there asking questions, but get some more of your crew and come."

Dugan realized that the man's emotions were not fear for himself, but worry for some one else.

"All right," he agreed, and called down to the boat, "Come on deck, one of you."

The men hesitated. "Weber," designated Dugan, used to calling on the boy for extra tasks, and in a moment he joined Dugan and the passenger, and the three ran down the deck toward the fire. As they went the man explained.

"When the fire-alarm came, I went to help with the fire, and my wife said she would call the other passengers near us. They put me where I couldn't get away, and for hours I haven't seen her. I have watched every boat that was loaded. Between times I have searched the stateroom and all those near it. The smoke is awful down there and she has been overcome and is lying unconscious somewhere. I want you to help me find her."

In the passage alongside the staterooms the smoke became worse as the three men went forward.

"A little more of this and I go back," objected Dugan; "your wife probably went in one of the boats while you were looking at another."

"This is our stateroom," said the man, "I'll look once more to be sure."

Dugan and Weber followed.

Inside the room the smoke was not so dense and a woman tottered toward their guide from where she had been lying across the bunk.

"John!" she cried, "I've been looking everywhere for you. I was afraid you were hurt. Take me out of here."

The man put his arm around the woman and turned toward the door.

"Yes, dear," he said soothingly, "there are plenty of boats. Here are two men from the rescue ship. We will go now."

DUGAN had been behind the man, and the woman had not yet seen him, but Bryan Weber had seen the shock of surprise, followed by the spasm of hate, which went over his features as he heard the woman speak, and then looked from behind her husband at her face. The man's revolver lay on a small table at one side of the room. Dugan stepped quickly forward and secured it.

The woman's eyes followed him fascinated.

"Cain!" she cried, "Cain Dugan! Stop him, John! He'll kill you."

Her voice rose into the hysterical note of absolute terror, and as her husband turned toward Dugan she repeated the warning in a barely audible whisper as she passed into unconsciousness.

"Yes, Alice," said Cain Dugan, addressing the woman as if she could still hear what he was saying. "The devil is good to his own. I knew that the big chance would come. I intend to kill this home-breaker before your eyes, just as I have always sworn to do."

Dugan was so full of his anger that he did not realize at first that the limp form of the woman in her husband's arms could not hear what he had to say. Then he addressed the man.

"So you are John Ryan. I'll show you how to break up a man's home."

Ryan did not answer.

"Everything has happened so well for me," continued Dugan, his words charged with sneering triumph. "I will shoot you in a moment and then carry the woman out to the boats. She has fainted and won't see me do it, but then that allows me to tell my own tale when I come to trial. A man mustn't expect too much."

John Ryan was no coward. As he faced Dugan's deadly rage his eyes did not waver

and his brain went over swiftly every detail of escape that he could think of. Why hadn't he thought of the pistol! He had laid it out so that it would be at hand if he needed it, and the precaution had been Dugan's opportunity. When Dugan's eyes hardened into a resolution to fire he would drop his wife and leap at his enemy, but until then what? The sight of little Bryan Weber gave him an idea. The boy stood close to the door and a little behind Dugan.

"You forget the man with you," said Ryan. "He will have a different tale from yours. With Alice's testimony the two of them will convict you."

"Man!" exclaimed Dugan, "that poor shrimp is no man. He'll do as I say, swear as I say, or keep his mouth shut as I say. He knows that I will kill him if he doesn't."

Bryan Weber wet his lips.

"Don't do it, Dugan," he pleaded in a voice which shook with his effort to keep it steady. "These two people love one another and are happy together. You shan't do it. You may threaten all you like, but I will tell on you as sure as I live if you shoot this man."

"You won't live, you little squealer. Say you'll keep your mouth shut or I'll begin on you."

He turned the pistol toward the boy, but before he could point it, Ryan had grasped the opportunity and hurled himself forward, letting his wife slip to the floor. One of his clutching hands struck the gun and knocked it to the deck as he grappled with Dugan. Weber leaped for it as swiftly as a cat jumps for a mouse, and caught it up.

Dugan had recovered from the first shock of the other's attack. Pulling Ryan's hands from his throat he hurled him across the deck, and as the man stumbled to his feet met him with a blow in the face which sent him down beside his wife. Then he turned to Weber.

"Gimme that gun," he ordered. "I want to finish this job before this old wagon blows up."

"No!" said Weber, backing away, "leave them alone or I'll shoot."

"Shoot!" dared Dugan, still advancing. "You haven't got the nerve. You poor chicken-hearted mama's boy."

Weber had his back to the wall.

"Keep off!" he begged. "I don't want to shoot."

"You bet you don't," scoffed Dugan, and made a flying leap at the boy.

He really thought that his cruel treatment on the *Dixie* had broken the younger man's spirit.

Weber fired twice. He was quick and handy with a revolver, and led his division in small-arm practise. Dugan plunged blindly on, struck the wall as Weber dodged, and slumped down on deck. Both shots had hit.

Ryan was trying to get to his feet and Weber helped him.

"I shot him," he sobbed. "I'll help you carry your wife out."

Together the two men picked up the still unconscious woman and groped their way down the smoke-filled passage. As they left the stateroom the door slammed shut behind them and the latch caught.

The people on deck had thinned out when Weber and Ryan reached the open air. "Hurry down the gangway," advised a smoke-blackened sailor, "there's a boat just about to shove off."

There are two places in the boat, and Weber had Ryan go with his wife.

"Jump aboard, kid," advised the *Senator's* officer who was in charge. "You look all in and you are light."

"No," said Weber, "I'll wait for my own boat. It's on the way back now."

His mind was confused as to what he ought to do.

The *Dixie's* boat that Dugan had come in had been filled with passengers and shoved off to its own ship without waiting for the two men absent, and now it was coming back with Dick Reasoner in charge. Weber saw him as he refused to get in the *Senator's* boat. He felt that Reasoner would understand about Dugan and he wanted his help. The boat shoved off and he stood on the lower gangway and waited.

Before the boat arrived other men joined him on the platform.

"She's going fast," said one. "There's only one bulkhead left between the ammunition and the fire."

"The captain is relieving the men and getting his papers together," answered the other. "There's two boats waiting alongside the other gangway to take off the last of the fire-hose men and the officers."

Above him Weber could hear the roar of the flames and it seemed as if the noise grew momentarily louder. He turned to

the men by him. Maybe it wasn't right to wait for Reasoner.

"There's a man down in stateroom twelve," he blurted out, "he's hurt——"

"Twelve, you say," interrupted the man. "Why, I wouldn't go back into twelve for all the money in the world. It's next the refrigerator plant, and the ammonia pipes are breaking. Not for me. How do you know there's somebody there yet?"

Weber did not answer, for Dick Reasoner's boat was alongside.

"Where's Dugan?" asked Reasoner. "Things are looking mighty bad, and we want to get all our men off. The passengers are all accounted for, and the rest of it is up to the *Senator's* officers."

"Dugan's hurt," said Weber, taking the easiest explanation to save time. "He's in stateroom twelve and can't get out. I can't lift him by myself."

"All right," said Reasoner cheerfully. "Jump out, half a dozen of you, and follow Weber."

Not a man of the second division moved. They did not intend to undergo even a slight risk for the sake of the hated Dugan. Reasoner had feared this. His first thought was that if the men of the division would help Dugan the man might feel grateful enough to relax a little in his severity. But the feeling against him had gone too deep. The second did not care what became of Dugan.

"Come now," persisted Reasoner. "I know how it is, but this has to be done. I would go myself if I didn't think it would do more good to have you go. There's no danger."

"No danger!" exclaimed one of the men on the gangway, and just ready to step into the boat. "Number twelve is right at the fire, and word has just come that the passage is filled with ammonia gas from the ice-tanks. The whole blooming ship is likely to go fluey any minute!"

"Out you go," insisted Reasoner.

He was sorry now that he had issued the order, but once given he felt that it must be obeyed for the good of the division. His tone was sharp, incisive, the men respected and liked him.

"The two forward thwarts," he directed.

"We'll do it for you," said one of the men, as the four stepped on to the gangway.

Weber ran in front of them.

"The more we hurry, the safer it will be," he encouraged, but those following did not increase their pace.

"We'll see how it looks," muttered one.

As Weber plunged into the smoke they hesitated, ran after him for a few paces, and then slowed to a walk. A man with his head tucked into his arm and dragging a hose, bumped into them.

"Get out of here!" he directed. "Captain's orders. Take your places for abandon ship!"

The four stopped. Weber had disappeared in the smoke down the passage.

"What's it to me about Dugan?" said one. "I'm for taking the safety-first route. What do you say, fellows? We can tell Reasoner that we couldn't make it."

"Where's Weber?" asked another. "I hate to let the kid go on alone."

"When he finds out he's alone, he'll come on out," said the first speaker. "We couldn't find him now if we went on."

And so it was that the four men trailed out into the clearer air on deck, and at the suggestion of the leader decided to wait a few minutes for Weber before they reported to Reasoner.

CAIN DUGAN only lapsed into complete unconsciousness for a few minutes. The shock of the two steel-jacketed bullets, the first one through his upper body, and the other through his right arm and shoulder as he extended his arm to catch the gun, wore off quickly, and as he sat up on the deck he saw that he was alone.

"Left me to burn," he muttered, "but I'll fool 'em yet."

Then he sought to pull himself to his feet against the wall. Half-way up his uninjured arm gave way, and he sank down.

"The kid did shoot," he said weakly. "I thought I had him busted."

Both of Dugan's wounds were bleeding freely, and he could feel himself losing strength. To reach the passage outside and get through the smoke to the upper deck, he must lose no time. With his uninjured hand, he bound a part of his blouse around the arm, wadded the remainder into a pack over his body wound, and started to crawl to the door. Twice on the journey he stopped to rest, but kept on doggedly. The smoke interfered with his breathing, and the injured arm dragged uselessly, making his progress difficult.

Only by calling on the last reserve of his great strength was he able to gain the door. For a full minute he lay panting before it, then inch by inch he raised himself, caught the knob and turned it. The door did not open. The latch was a foot higher up, and Dugan, stupid with pain, sank to the floor before he realized the trouble.

The door opened inboard. Once more Dugan pulled himself up by the knob. Then with infinitely greater effort, he gained the additional foot to the latch, even pulled it back, and sought to open the door, but his inert body blocked him. The door came open an inch and no more, for one of Dugan's knees, which he was powerless to move, was in the way. A blast of smoke and the stifling sting of ammonia gas in his nostrils, sent him reeling backward, and an awkward foot slammed the door again.

Flat on the deck, Dugan realized that he could not open the door, that he could not raise himself to the knob again, and unless more strength came to him, that he could not even move. This was a new feeling to Dugan. Always there had been an abundance of strength to do with as he wished, to override all oppositions, to make others obey him, and now he was suddenly shorn of it all and left to die miserably by a man he had sworn to kill, a woman whom he had taught to fear him, and a boy whose courage he despised. Rage and humiliation burned in his soul, but as he lay helpless they cooled somewhat, and left only bitterness and a clearer vision of his life.

Always he had been unhappy, and always he had dominated and ruled brutally. And now facing the end, he knew why no one came to get him out, why little Weber, driven into a corner, had fired, why men loved Dick Reasoner, and fled from him. Knew the whole volume of hate, and that its answer in a crisis was failure. Realized fully that love and hate are like mysteries of the soul, and that the more a man gives of each, the more he gets.

"It can't be long now," he groaned, grimly looking up at the closed door.

The smell of the gas came to him a little stronger, and he closed his eyes. They stung with the increasing smoke, and it eased the irritation, but the noise of the fire became louder, and he had to open them. As he did so, the door burst open, and Bryan Weber came in with head bent and nose in his wet neckkerchief. Dugan thought his eyes were tricking him until the boy began shaking him.

"Help's coming," he cried. "Talk to me, Dugan. Are you alive? I came back as soon as I could get help. I tried to put the bullets in your shoulders."

Dugan's good arm pulled the boy down. Weber leaped back, breaking the hold.

"Don't be afraid," whispered Dugan. "I won't hurt you. I'm pretty well messed up. One of the shots went low."

Reassured, Weber bent over him.

"The others are coming," he repeated. "I'm afraid I can't carry you alone."

They waited a little, and Weber tried to adjust the blouse more tightly around Dugan's wounds.

"There's not much time," whispered Dugan. "Can't you hear the fire comin', and there's some kind of gas escapin'."

"I might drag you," offered Weber. "The others may have missed the stateroom."

"Missed on purpose," said Dugan harshly, "and at that you can't blame 'em. What made you come back?" he demanded, with a return of his old imperiousness.

"I didn't want to," acknowledged Weber, "but I shot you."

Opening the door, Weber grasped Dugan by the shoulders and lifted him up. Dugan cried out with pain.

"Take my feet," he directed. "I can't stand it that way."

Across the room and through the doorway Weber toiled with the dead weight of the heavy man. Outside the full force of the smoke and gas struck them. Weber could not longer protect his nose, for both hands were necessary on Dugan's legs to make headway. After a few yards he went to his knees, choking for breath.

"Leave me here and get out," ordered Dugan. "You can't make it, kid."

His voice came jerkily from between shut teeth. The strain on his legs, and the bumping over the deck were almost unbearable.

Weber took up his burden again. He had heard Dugan, but would not give up. Every few feet he stopped and then went on, but the stops were longer and the feet gained fewer.

"Quit, I tell you!" said Dugan at the next stop. "You've done all you can, and

there's no use of both of us going. You can make it without me."

Weber's answer was to take up Dugan's feet and stumble on. But this time he moved barely a foot before he stopped, went to his knees and from his knees to his stomach. As he tried to struggle up again, letting go of his burden, a strong hand lifted him and shoved him down the passage. It was Reasoner.

"I'll bring Dugan," he said. "Get on out and take your place in the boat."

Weber obeyed. What Dick Reasoner promised, he would do.

When the men sent with Weber reported that the smoke had driven them out, and that Weber had gone on alone, Reasoner guessed what had happened, for he knew that the men of the second did not intend to risk much to save Dugan, and that in the smoke it would be difficult to find stateroom twelve. So he went to the rescue himself, and thought he was lucky when he found Weber and Dugan in the passage. As Weber went on at his orders, he picked up the heavy man in the approved first-aid manner, and bore him to comparative safety on deck. The officers of the *Senator* were rounding up the last members of the fire-fighters, and getting them into the boats. All felt that it was barely a question of minutes till the magazines blew up, and that hurry was necessary.

"See if your men are all out," directed the first officer. "We are abandoning."

A sailor helped Reasoner down the gangway with his burden, where he turned Dugan over to the hospital steward, and mustered his crew. The four who had failed to follow Weber kept their eyes in the boat, and Reasoner did not speak to them. He felt that when the whole story of Weber's heroism came out, they would be punished enough.

With temporary bandages in place, Dugan lay in the stern-sheets of the boat. Reasoner had the tiller, and Weber, too weak to pull an oar, sat aft also. For half the trip over, Dugan was silent, then he spoke to Weber.

"Kid, I've been all wrong about you. The rest of this second division is a bum lot, but you're a little man. Don't be worryin' about these punctures. Pills' striker tells me that I'll make it O. K." Then he turned his eyes to Reasoner.

"Dictionary Dick," he said, smiling wanly, "I've made a lot of fun of you and your queer notions, but you've called the turn every time, and I'll have to hand it to you. Your system has mine skinned a Dutch knot. Now I'm goin' to save your old bean a lot of worry. As soon as I spill this little yarn to the captain I'm askin' for transfer. This second division wouldn't ever forget, and sometimes when a man's in a pinch, he needs friends. On another ship I'll start different and see——"

"I wouldn't talk so much, Dugan," interrupted the hospital steward, "it might start the bleeding again."

Dugan glared at him.

"Shut up yourself," he said, with a flare of his old temper. "I stop when I'm through." Then in a moment he asked humbly enough, "Could I speak one more word to Weber?"

The steward nodded, and Weber bent over to hear the low-spoken words.

"Tell Alice for me that she can go on and live her life in peace, and that I'll live mine."

Then the injured man settled back, and neither Reasoner nor Weber heard his muttered comment as they went alongside the *Dixie*, and a dull roar behind them heralded the last of the *Senator*.

"Gone!" he said. "That's what almost happened to me, only I've been given another chance."

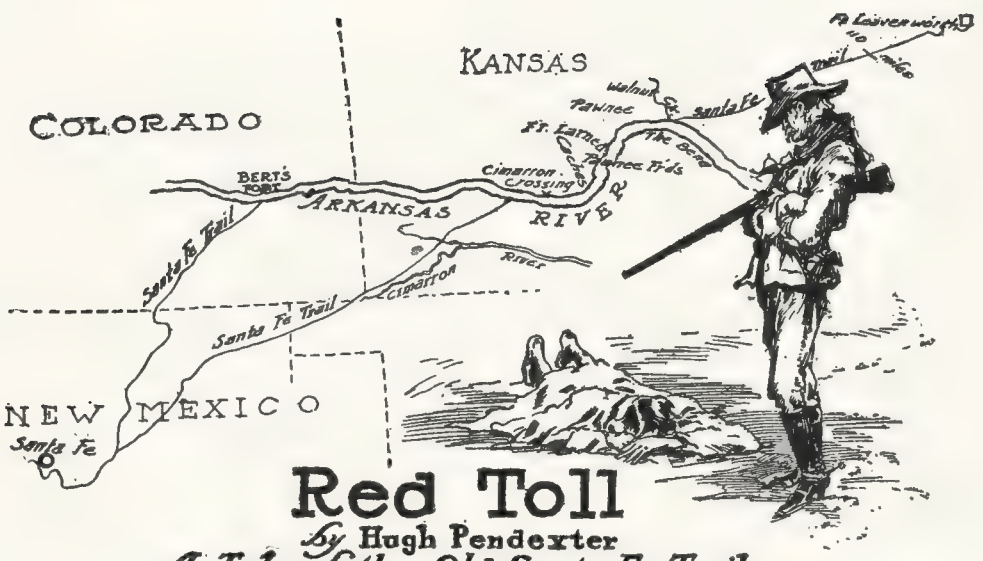
THE *Dixie* steamed at full speed for the nearest port, where the passengers from the *Senator* and the wounded were landed. Slim Higgins and Reasoner were at the rail as the boat shoved off with Dugan aboard.

"Well, Dick," said Slim, "what's the good word?"

"Reverse," answered Reasoner. "I've looked it up carefully, and it means to turn backward; to change entirely."

"Reverse," repeated Slim. "I follow you, old worm. To shift gears. Well, my fond hope is that Dugan's clutch don't slip, and that he can keep right on backin' up to 'reverie' and 'reverence.' He needs 'em both."

Slim turned away to keep his face straight, and Reasoner looked at him with a puzzled frown, for how could Reasoner know that Slim had raided his sea-chest and found the little cross-marks by the words in the well-thumbed dictionary?



Red Toll

By Hugh Pendexter

A Tale of the Old Santa Fe Trail

Author of "The Magic Arrow," "Yancey of the Rangers," etc.

THE CLOSE of the Revolutionary War found many venturesome spirits unwilling to return to the humdrum of farm and mercantile life. Early in 1800 adventurers exploring the Southwest learned that Mexicans in Santa Fé were eager to pay two and three dollars a yard for cheap cotton cloths. When this information had filtered back East thrifty New Englanders, restless Southerners and bold frontiersmen were quick to try their luck as merchants. The enormous profits taken by those who eluded the wild-riding Comanche, fierce Apache, blood-thirsty Kiowa, and numerous other plains tribes resulted in the introduction of Pittsburgh-made wagons to the old Santa Fé Trail in 1824.

Some three centuries before this Coronado, Cabeca de Vaca, and the survivors of the ill-fated De Soto expedition had tramped the Indian highway in rusty mail, lured on by legends of golden cities. Although conquistador gave way for American merchants the bait remained the same, Mexican silver being substituted for gold. Trapper, trader, missionary, hunter, soldier and colonist, in the order named, began fulfilling the destiny of the new continent by blazing the way for steam-propelled commerce.

The first wagons, "prairie schooners," had a capacity of a ton and a half, each being drawn by eight mules or as many oxen. They were a marvelous improvement over the old pack-mule trains and quickened trade to an amazing degree. They were soon doubled in capacity and required ten or twelve mules or oxen to haul them. And as the vehicles increased in size and numbers so did the Indians increase the ferocity of their opposition, till the trail was fringed with raw scalps. The red man's lust for plunder was succeeded by the conviction the influx of traders meant an end to the buffalo.

The Old Trail was loyal to the red man. From Missouri up the Arkansas and beyond the Great Bend as far as the Cimarron Crossing it was a broad and obvious route, easily followed by the unsophisticated so far as any topographical disadvantages were concerned. In the mad rush for Mexican silver many amateurs at the frontier game accepted the first half of the trail as an earnest for the whole, and set forth without proper guides.

Once the Cimarron Crossing was reached, however, the dusty ribbon of travel vanished and in its place were innumerable buffalo trails radiating in all directions from the river. Ordinarily the tenderfeet and greenhorns sought to push on, and thus the trail frequently became a trap, with red

toll accumulating in many savage tepees. Nor were ignorant Easterners the only victims.

It is recorded that veteran trappers from the Rocky Mountains, egotistical in having surmounted the obstacles of the upper Platte and Yellowstone, laughed at the suggestion of danger and voted the monotonous plains country a child's playground. Often such men became lost beyond the sparkling Crossing.

WHEN "Silent" Leroux drifted into Fort Larned to secure a job as posthunter he made a favorable impression by the respect he paid the trail.

Famed for years of travel through the inaccessible portions of the West he was one of a few of a vanished race who did not treat the trail contemptuously. He studied it from all angles and never was deceived by superficial appearances.

It might have been a strange, fierce animal found alive in one of his traps from his cautious manner of approaching its various phases.

From 110-Mile Creek to Pawnee Rock, to the Cimarron Crossing, and thence to the Purgatory River country and Bent's Fort, he examined it in detail. By patience and wariness he learned the trap before it could close upon him.

He was typically American, although the veneer of civilization was long since sloughed off. He used to declare that he "thought in Injun." His nickname resulted from no inherent trait of taciturnity. When young and callow he was one of the first white men to penetrate the wonders of the Yellowstone region. He was loquacious enough in those days and zestfully informed a trappers' camp and hunters' bivouac about the mud volcanoes, steaming geysers, boiling springs and petrified forests.

It naturally followed he was ridiculed unmercifully. As he was not enough of a philosopher to ignore such treatment and wait contentedly for Time to substantiate his stories he changed into an exceedingly close-mouthed man; hence his sobriquet.

As a hunter he was worthy to precede Kit Carson, prince of frontiersmen, whom Fate already was grooming to tread these same scenes.

The post commander early observed that in addition to supplying sufficient meat for the fort and passing trains he never came in from the hunt without some laconic, correct report as to the movements of the various tribes. His value as a scout soon overshadowed his work as a hunter.

When "Texas" Charlie, chief of scouts, leaped from his exhausted pony and reported the finding of a brother scout killed at Ash Creek the commander sent for Leroux.

As the old man slouched in the commander hurriedly began:

"Texas Charlie just arrived with bad news, Silent. Two Birds, one of our Crow scouts, has been wiped out on Ash Creek. Those —— Kiowa you reported as moving north of the Republican Fork to hunt buffalo on the Platte swung back."

It was customary to blame the Kiowa on general principles, as they were the most bloodthirsty and cruel of all the plains Indians. In proportion to their numbers they probably killed more whites than any other one tribe.

Silent thoughtfully twisted his wisp of gray beard and frowned.

"Th' Kiowy was movin' north o' th' Republican Fork," he slowly insisted. "They've patched up a peace with th' Pawnee. Goin' to hunt together, them two. I reckon I know what I know. If they done f'r Two Birds it's th' work of a few young bucks keen to git their feathers."

"Kiowas did it," declared the commander, pulling something from his pocket. "Of course you couldn't know they would swing back after crossing the Fork. But swing back they did."

"—— it! Don't I know Injuns?" broke in Silent, with the independent scout's disregard for rank. "Reckon I knowed Injuns afore ye was born. I say it could be th' work of only a handful o' young braves. It wouldn't take th' whole Kiowy nation to wipe out a Crow scout."

The commander heard him patiently, and quietly replied—

"This tells the whole story."

He handed over a fragment of deerskin, cut from a hunting shirt. It contained a picture-writing done in black.

"Texas found it near where Two Birds was killed," added the commander.

Silent stared incredulously at the picture message and beheld:

The old hunter was an expert in the sign-language of the plains, an indispensable aid to interpreting the drawings made by Indians to convey a message. There was no attempt at artistic skill in the picture; simply an effort to announce a fact. It was as readily comprehensible to him as though he had been an eye-witness of the tragedy.

"Two Birds surprised at th' crick an' didn't have time to run for it," Silent read aloud. "Th' up 'n' down line is th' bank behind which he hid. Keeps low an' sees a big number o' Kiowy comin'. They don't know he's there yet. There was a whalin' big bunch of 'em, as showed by th' hoof-tracks. He don't know whether he'll git clear or be wiped out. So he makes this report hopin' ye'll git it and larn th' Kiowy is on th' war-path in big numbers.

"Th' two birds over his head 'dentifies him; but to make sure he stripes off his ha'r to show th' Crow custom o' usin' red-clay. To leave no doubt 'bout they bein' Kiowy he makes th' reg'lar picter f'r that tribe—a man wavin' both hands foolish-like."

And he mechanically gave the sign-language designation of the Kiowa by raising his right hand level with his head and revolving it, to signify "rattle brained," or "crazy." Thus the gesture would be interpreted by every plains Indian from Mexico to Canada.

"The poor devil made it all plain enough," said the commander. "I want you and Texas to follow and learn their direction."

Silent grunted wrathfully and complained:

"I snum! that gits me. There ain't no doubt but what there was a big band of 'em; an' yet I was sure they was off f'r a buf'ler hunt. Yep; th' whole dad b'ilin' of 'em must have swung back."

"A blind man could see that," tersely remarked the commander. "After Texas has had a sleep you two must locate the band. They must be taught a lesson. Too many of our scouts are being wiped out. The men are beginning to get nervous."

"Th' Crow makes six inside a month," mused Silent. "There was Cayuse at th' Cimarron, Big an' Little Rusty at Pawnee Forks near where this happened, th' breed at th' Walnut, an' Little Irish at th' Rock (Pawnee)."

"Lean Wolf is behind it," fumed the commander. "He's made his brags he'll wipe out all our scouts. I'll give two hundred dollars for his scalp—if he has to be taken dead."

"I opine that's th' way he'd have to be took," muttered the old hunter, his faded gray eyes twinkling. "Leastways some one in his neighborhood would have to lose a scalp if I ever met up with him. I'll be ready when Texas is."

"He stayed long enough to bury Two Birds; then rode without a break here. It's his nerves more than anything. He thinks every scout is being dogged. But as soon as he can sit a saddle he'll go with you."

Silent returned to studying the picture. Finally he asked:

"Why two of us? We'd cover more ground by splittin' up."

The commander laughed harshly, saying:

"You haven't any Indian in your blood. Texas' grandmother was a Cheyenne. His father was a white trader at Bent's. He's superstitious. Says he won't take a trail alone again till after Lean Wolf has been killed.

"Wal, Texas don't show his Injun blood any, an' a man don't have to be a breed to feel that a-way," drawled Silent. "Reckon I'll feel better f'r havin' a good man by my side. It'll git on my nerves if any more of us is killed. I'll be ridin' out a bit. Be back time Charlie's fit to climb a saddle."

THE post commander was in a rare rage when the old hunter rode in after an absence of nearly two days. But the high scout mortality forced him to swallow his wrath. He greeted:

"Now that you've finally returned I suppose you will have to take a rest. First one man, then another."

"Oh, I'm all hunky," mildly assured Silent. "Thought I'd scared up some new signs, but they sort o' petered out. I'm fit's a fiddle. Where's Texas?"

"Inside, trying to drown his blue devils

with whisky," growled the commander. "You've stayed away too long to follow up the Ash Creek trail. Tried to get Texas to go out alone yesterday, but he refused. Now, new work has turned up. A big train is due to arrive at the Cimarron Crossing any day. You two must get there and give warning that the Kiowa are out in force."

"If some one else can go I reckon Texas an' me can still pick up th' Ash Creek trail," penitently replied Silent.

"There's no one else to go—all the rest are out. The train must be warned. Besides, the band that killed Two Birds is probably down the trail by this time, laying for the train."

"We'll warn 'em, all right," assured Silent. "I'll take a snack with Texas, then we'll make th' Cimarron hell-flukin'."

He found Texas Charlie seated at a rough table in the mess-room with a plate of untouched venison before him and the bottle half empty. It was obvious the scout's nerves were demoralized. Silent saluted him with a cheerful grin and poured himself a drink. Texas, slim and wiry and showing no trace of his Cheyenne blood except in his small black eyes, returned the amiable glance with a scowl and reached for the bottle. A breed brought in a platter of meat which the hunter attacked hungrily.

As Silent made no offer to talk Texas finally demanded—

"Scouting?"

"Yep; didn't find nothin'. Reckon Lean Wolf an' his braves is pretty far north by this time."

"And I reckon you're very much mistaken," sullenly retorted Texas. "I feel it in my bones he's near, ready to strike. I'll be number seven." The last with a faint shudder and a lunge for the bottle.

"Dod rot it!" angrily exclaimed Silent. "Can't I read signs? Don't I know a thing or two 'bout this game? Think ye know it all jest 'cause ye can talk book English? I tell ye Lean Wolf's off to hunt with th' Pawnee. He sent 'em a peace talk an' a pipe more'n a month ago. I *know* that."

"I'm not casting any reflections on your knowledge," stiffly replied Texas. "But Lean Wolf's band wiped out Two Birds, the sixth of our scouts since the sending of the calumet to the Pawnee. The hunting trip to the Platte is a ruse; or as you say, 'all in your eye.' "

"Hold on a minute!" gasped Silent, suspending his eating to gaze in admiration at the slim and dapper figure. "Jest lem'me corral some o' that language. Is it halter-broke?"

Flashing his white teeth in a shadow of a smile, Texas apologized:

"I can't help it. I was educated in the best schools in St. Louis from the age of eight to twenty-one."

"I swow! Ye didn't hear much Injun in St. Looey," remarked Silent.

Texas' face took on a deeper bronze. He never spoke of his ancestry.

"I was bred to speak only English," he curtly replied. "If I'd gone East instead of returning to this cursed country—and yet I wouldn't have fitted in there. Well, I'm here—the bottle's here. We'll drink to the trail."

"Don't ye git touchy, Texas, at what an ol' man says. Reckon I talk lots o' foolishness every time I open my yap. Jest keep on spillin' good English. I hanker to hear it. Makes me think how I mighter larned to talk it if I'd stayed where I belonged in place o' chasin' out here to larn th' sign-language of a parcel o' red beggars."

"Not very complimentary to the noble Indian," observed Texas with a bitter laugh. "Six in a month! Looks as though the cards were stacked against us. And a wagon train is due at Cimarron Crossing and we must ride to give it warning—bah! There's no bite to this post whisky. My nerves still feel all unraveled." Rising, he pushed back the bottle in disgust. "I'll be in the corral."

Silent bolted his food and soon followed his brother scout to the horse-corral. Texas was ready to mount. The old man flung his saddle and blanket roll on a vicious pony and the two rode out on the trail.

"After giving the word, scout back on both sides of the river and look for fresh signs," the commander called after them.

The men nodded and cantered away, a strange contrast in types. Texas was immaculate in fresh buckskin. His glossy black hair, worn long, was carefully groomed and accented the suggestion of dandyism. His weapons were inlaid with silver, after the Mexican fashion, and were the last word in efficiency.

The old hunter was shaggy and dishevelled, roughly clothed, indifferently armed, and grotesquely mounted. The ax

in his belt gave a touch of the primitive. A stranger to his history would never have picked him as being the one of the two who came from the East.

"About as much alike as an apple and a cactus," commented the commander as he watched them disappear down the trail. "Contradictions at every point; and yet the two best men I've got."

SILENT was inclined to conversation as he and his companion neared the Caches without having discovered any new signs. Texas, too, seemed to have discarded his nervous mood and spoke frankly of his life in St. Louis.

"Even now I can't make it seem real," he morosely declared as they slowed down at the Caches. "I spent nearly all my life there, and yet it seems as though it was a dream, that I had never quit the trail."

"Injun talk come natural to ye?" timidly asked Silent.

"I absorbed it," sighed Texas. "I speak English according to the book, but I always feel as though I was repeating something I had memorized."

"By jing! Reckon no one could talk it so O. K. 'less he done a mighty big heap o' mem'rizin'," admiringly cried the hunter. "Reckon I'm too old to larn it as she should be spoke."

"It was my father's orders that I should have it hammered into me—it was."

"Wal, I wish my father'd fixed it so it could 'a' been hammered—hi! I count a coup!" And leaping from his pony Silent held aloft a small deerskin pouch.

"Medicine bag?" curiously queried Texas.

Silent took out several fragments of black micaceous iron and made soft black marks on the back of his wrinkled hand, and corrected:

"War paint. Paint-bag."

"If a Kiowa dropped it, it proves the hunting trip to the Platte was merely a cover for a raid along the trail," Texas forcefully declared.

"Bead work says Kiowy," slowly admitted the hunter after studying the pouch closely. "Represents Sci-Manzi, th' 'Mescal Woman.' I've seen it on th' sacred gourd rattles used in th' mescal ceremony; but never on a paint-bag afore."

"Wish I were as well versed in reading their picture-writing as you are," said Texas.

"An' I wish I could swap what I know f'r yer knack o' tossin' th' English lingo 'round. Funny world. Camp here or push on to th' Crossing?"

"Neither," was the prompt reply. "I'll ride a half circle on this side of the river while you do the same on the other side. We'll meet five miles below here at the big patch of sage-brush. We ought to hit the trail of the war party that lost that pouch."

"Good talk," grunted Silent. "I knew yer nerve would come back once ye hit th' trail. S'long." And wheeling his pony he dashed through the shallow ford and sped away in a wide detour.

Although it lacked two hours of sunset and he had no need for haste he used the quirt liberally and maintained a sharp pace. Traveling rapidly he passed the rendezvous of sage-brush and galloped a mile before turning back to the river. Then instead of riding back to the brush he crossed the stream and continued due north. Two more miles were covered in this direction; then he dismounted, and, leading his pony, turned his back to the setting sun and proceeded slowly, his head bowed low, his eyes searching the ground.

Descending a low ridge covered with a coarse scrub grass he halted and dropped on his hands and knees. The light was failing and in the hollow it was difficult to pick up signs. Lowering his head like a hound he cautiously crawled about, his pony keeping at his heels. At last he grunted contentedly and rapidly described a circle. When he had finished he sprang to his feet, displaying an agility not to be expected of his years, and vaulted into the saddle. This time he raced southwest, heading for the Crossing.

The pony responded to the demands of his master as though his very ugliness were converted into fresh speed and endurance. It lacked an hour of midnight when the hunter splashed into the Crossing and ascended the opposite bank.

Near the river glowed smoldering campfires. His noisy crossing had attracted attention, and as he became a silhouette against the sky-line a sharp voice called out:

"Red or white? Quick, or I'll fire."

"Gov'ment scout from Fort Larned in a hell-of-a-hustle," bawled back the hunter. "What train's this?"

"Colonel Vrain's. Who are you? Advance, or I'll fire."

Silent could hear men crawling from beneath the prairie schooners, their rifles rattling against the wheels. But he had no time to waste in visiting.

"I'm the Gov'ment scout from Larned," he repeated. "I've a long ride afore me. I'm sent to warn ye that ye'll be jumped by a small band o' Kiowy at sunrise. There's 'bout thirty of 'em. Corral yer wagons an' double yer guard. How many rifles have ye?"

"'Nough to handle any thirty reds," was the suspicious reply. "Just ride forward, or I'll plug ye."

"Ye'll be jumped at sunrise, or a leetle before. Make yer own medicine."

With that he turned and dashed into the stream and rode like mad along the south side of the Arkansas.

THE east was beginning to redden when he leaped from his blown pony at the cover of sage-brush. Texas quickly emerged, crying:

"Where have you been? I thought they'd got you."

"Struck signs of a war-party an' rode on to th' Crossin' to warn th' train. It's Colonel Vrain's outfit," wearily replied Silent as he turned his pony loose and entered the brush.

"Of all the fool moves!" gritted Texas. "Why didn't you come back here to meet me? Then both of us could have gone and stayed to help the train if it came to a fight."

"Reckon I got nervous. Then ag'in, it was some ride from here. Didn't even know as I'd find ye here. Thought ye might 'a' struck th' same signs an' foller'd 'em up."

"I've sweat blood waiting here alone," growled Texas. "Believed you'd been wiped out. Then decided it would be my turn before morning."

"Wal, it's done an' th' train's warned. I didn't go very near as I was keen to git back. Feller offered to shoot me f'r my pains—cussed tenderfeet let loose to raise Cain on th' trail!"

Texas remained standing, nervously twisting his black mustache, his eyes turned toward the Crossing. Silent dropped to the ground with a grunt of content and examined his long rifle.

"You need sleep. I'll stand guard," snapped Texas over his shoulder.

"No more'n ye do," reminded Silent. "Ye've been awake all night a-worryin'. Lawdy! Wish I knowed English like what ye do. I'd quit this life an' go back to th' States an' be a gen'l'man."

Texas laughed harshly.

"You'd need something besides book English to be accepted as a gentleman," he bitterly informed. "You'd need money, lots of it. You'd be a gentleman as long as it lasted. It wouldn't make any difference how you got it so long as you had it—there are no poor gentlemen."

"Shucks! Ye don't say! Did ye ever try it out, Texas?"

Still facing the west the scout monotonously replied:

"So long as my father lived I had plenty of money. I was invited to places, made much of. Rich trader's son. When he died the money stopped. Very few invitations. Then again——"

"Yep; then ag'in—" softly prompted Silent.

"It was noised about I was neither white nor red—I had no folks!" gritted the scout.

"What odds could that make?" puzzled Silent.

"What odds? Why, you doddering—I forgot. You've been lost out here all your life. The plains are kinder than the East in that respect. It makes this difference, old man. If you wish to marry, people suddenly get very curious about your history and insist on knowing all about your parents—I learned my lesson once. And I came out here."

"Ye know th' East better'n I do," wistfully admitted Silent. "An' come to think of it I reckon I couldn't stand bein' shet up in a wooden house. Still there's times when I git mighty sick o' buf'ler an' Injuns—meanin' fightin' Injuns. So ye jumped back to th' trail an' went right to scoutin', eh?"

"I've been a Government scout for some time. Big train?"

"Not very—all tenderfeet."

"Then if you can't sleep we'll ride to the Crossing. Our guns will be needed." And the scout whistled shrilly to his pony.

"Be ye crazy?" protested Silent. "My cayuse is dead beat. Ain't they got their warnin'? It's up to them—an' we never could make it in time. Th' sun's due in a few minutes. We'd only run into th' Injuns an' be scalped."

Texas hesitated, complaining—

"But to remain here when our help is needed——"

"Hark!" broke in Silent, lifting his hand. "Hear that? Guns, by th' Etarnal!"

"They've jumped it already!" hoarsely cried the scout, striding back and forth in much agitation.

A splutter of rifle fire, coming faintly down the river, indicated the beginning of a battle. Silent's face twisted with anxiety. The rifle fire was a code he could skilfully interpret. The scattered shots evidenced a surprise attack successfully carried out. The same thought was in Texas' mind, for he muttered—

"No backbone in that shooting."

"Hooray!" yelled the hunter, drawing his ax and brandishing it exultingly. "But there's backbone in *that*." This as the rifle fire suddenly increased in volume and became marked with well-defined regularity. "That ain't no Injun shootin'. Th' red devils thought they'd worked a game an' they're hooked! Hear 'em! I must 'a' been mistook 'bout their bein' tenderfeet. There's some ol' hands in that train—firin' in squads, so's not to unload all their guns at th' same time."

"Our help may be needed! Come along," cried the scout, making for his pony.

Silent held him back by clutching his fringed sleeve.

"Be ye crazy?" he demanded. "It'll be all over afore we can make it. My pony's winded. Th' train's either beat 'em off an' will be rollin' along here in a few hours, or else it's wiped out. No matter who's won we'd be sure to run into th' Injuns an' lose our ha'r."

The logic of this could not be gainsaid. Texas returned to the little opening in the heart of the brush, mumbling:

"It sounds cold-blooded, but it's common sense. It will be finished before we can make it. The fire seems to be dropping."

Both pricked their ears. Only occasional shots were being fired. Either the Indians were retreating or finishing off the wounded. Silent's withered face became distorted with fear. Then all doubt was removed when there came a staccato volley. Waving his ax the old hunter yelled:

"That tells th' whole story! Th' —— beggars got a bellyful an' are runnin' away. They're beat so bad th' train ain't skeered to let off all their guns at once!"

"They're whipped," assented Texas, dropping to the ground. "But we ought to have made a try for it. Go to sleep—I'll watch till the train comes up."

Silent stretched his arms in a yawn and rose and procured his blanket roll, surrendering—

"Reckon I will snooze a bit now th' 'citement's over. Feel sort o' peaked." Reseating himself he fumbled with a thong of rawhide tied 'round his blanket, then paused to remark, "Say, Texas, d'ye know that picter-writin' ye found up Ash Crick way worried me a heap? Made me think I was jest a dad blamed ol' fool."

Texas jerked up his head in surprise and demanded—

"How so?"

"Wal, it showed Two Birds had plenty o' time to make his writin' afore th' Injuns jumped him. He made it so's to give th' fort warnin' 'bout th' Kiowy if he should be wiped out."

"Of course."

"But if he had time to do that why'n sin didn't he make a run f'r it?"

"He was on the east side of the creek. They were between him and the fort. Probably his pony was winded."

"That's prob'ly it," drowsily agreed Silent, unfastening the second thong and removing his belt and placing his ax upon it. "He must 'a' been a mighty smart Injun. Smarter'n I'd reckoned on. It ain't in Injun natur' to figger things out that way. It would 'a' been more natural if he'd give a war-whoop once he saw he was cornered, start singin' his death-song an' pitch into them. But he took time to make a writin' like a white man would do who knew he was done f'r an' wanted to send a last word to th' world. I kicked him once f'r stealin' my whisky—wish I hadn't. He wa'n't no artist, but he was strong f'r gittin' in th' facts."

"Indian picture-writing shows no knowledge of perspective. Proportion is never considered," impatiently reminded Texas. "Better turn in, or the train will be here before you can get any rest."

"I'm goin' to—I'm dead tired. Proportion? Wal, I reckon not. Say, d'ye notice how he made his head bigger'n th' whole flock o' hoss-tracks? He sure showed th' Injun conceit when he come to draw hisself. Th' two birds was 'nough, but he even took time to stripe off his long ha'r

like th' Sioux do when they want to mean a Crow."

"I see nothing in that to make you feel worried," snapped Texas, tearing up little tufts of grass between his crossed legs. "Better turn in."

"Jest what I'm goin' to do—I'll sleep like a top, too. Ye see, it fussed me up because th' picter showed there was a heap o' hossmen. He jest wanted to hammer that fact home."

"He saw them. He knew how many he saw."

"An' there's th' nub what fussed me. F'r jest afore he was wiped out I scouted that region some keerful an' larned Lean Wolf an' th' bulk of his men was off to j'in th' Pawnee in a big buf'ler hunt. That's what I reported back to th' fort. Th' commander must think I'm an ol' fool."

"Any scout is apt to read signs wrong at times," mumbled Texas.

"I'd overlook it in another, but in my own case it hurt my feelin's," said Silent, beginning to open the blanket. "Why, I even was so upsot at my mistake I jest took a scout up th' crick arter ye arrived with th' picter."

"You did?"

The query shot out like a bullet, the scout drawing his heels beneath him as though to rise, his gaze narrowing.

With a raucous laugh Silent gathered his feet under him and continued—

"That's what I done—an' I couldn't find nary a sign o' th' Kiowy what Two Birds marked down in his picter."

"So? But it's only a guess that he made the drawing. I picked it up some distance from where I found him. It may have belonged to a Kiowa, who had it to use when he made up his Winter count (calendar of tribal events)."

Silent shook his head, dissenting:

"Scurcely possible, seein' as how it pictered Two Birds. Either he made it, or th' Injuns, what wiped him out, made it. But if Injuns done it th' picter would show him killed. No; th' Kiowy couldn't 'a' made it. An' yet it was made with th' same kind o' paint that I found in th' pouch at th' Caches—cur'ous."

"Who, then, but Two Birds could have made it?" hoarsely demanded Texas.

"Lawd bless ye! I don't know, 'less it was some one who hated white folks an' their Gov'ment scouts because he, hisself, was neither white nor red," retorted Silent as he smoothed out the blanket.

With a sharp intake of breath Texas leaned forward and glared at the blanket. For nearly a minute the two sat rigid and silent, then the scout whispered—

"Where did you get *that?*"

"From th' body I dug up," gritted Silent, balancing on the balls of his feet as he met and returned the ferocious gaze. "Two trails led to th' east bank o' th' Ash. Only one quit it. Two Birds was killed in his sleep; murdered inside his blanket by some one he trusted."

He paused and pointed at the tell-tale hole made by the mortal knife-blow. Then he loudly cried:

"Ye —— renegade, neither white nor red, ye done f'r him jest as ye done f'r th' scouts at th' Cimarron Crossing, at th' Rock, at Pawnee Forks, at th' Walnut, an' as ye'd planned to do f'r me. Ye made believe ye didn't dare take th' trail alone along o' fearin' Lean Wolf. Yer book English made ye cute, but not cute 'nough to fool th' ol' man, who knows more Injun than ye do. I knew somethin' was wrong th' minute I see that picter-writin'.

"Ye made *a mistake when ye put in so many hosses.* I've been watchin' ye all th' time. I follered ye yesterday. I found th' signs where ye met a small band o' Kiowy after quittin' me. I found where yer trail j'ined theirs. Ye had a pow-wow with 'em an' rigged it f'r 'em to jump th' train——"

With an animal shriek of rage the lithe body of the scout lengthened out in a murderous leap, his right hand flashing a long knife. But Silent was a second the quicker, his left hand flirting Two Birds' blanket into the breed's infuriated face while his right swung back the heavy ax.

"COLONEL VRAIN'S train jumped by thirty Kiowy at Cimarron Crossin'. Injuns licked. Lost fifteen braves—Texas Charlie wiped out near th' Caches!"

"My God! The seventh!" gasped the commander.

"Ye should thank th' Lawd," corrected Silent, dropping from his pony. "F'r Texas makes th' last. Come inside an' I'll tell ye why it's a blessin'."

Hidden Trails

A FIVE-PART STORY, Part 2

by William Patterson White

Author of "Paradise Bend," "Longhorns," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IN THE longhorn country, when one gentleman bestows baneful glances upon another, it behooves the innocent bystander to be vigilant.

So when Johnny Ramsay, of the Cross-in-a-box, observed a red-headed individual glance sourly in through the door of the Happy Heart Saloon at a brown-bearded stranger drinking at the bar, he sat upright. A few minutes later the red-head entered and sat in at a game of poker.

One of the players being forced to retire, the red-head invited Brownbeard to take the empty place. Brownbeard would rather not. Red-head insisted and insinuated. Brownbeard strode to the table and sat down.

The deal passed around the table and came to Brownbeard. As he flipped the first card to the red-head, the latter's gun flashed while he sent the cards flying. Brownbeard sank in a heap.

"He tried to skin us, the —— tinhorn! Didya see him deal from the bottom of the deck?" exclaimed the red-head indignantly.

No one had—but no one could prove otherwise. "Slim" Berdan, the town marshal, settled the case quickly.

"Stranger," said he, "yuh got twenty minutes to pull yore freight out o' Farewell, or we'll hang yuh some."

Before the body was buried Jake Rule, Sheriff of Fort Creek County, arrived and identified the dead man as Mat Neville, a Wells-Fargo detective, a man who had never been known to cheat in his life.

CREAK and jangle! Hoofbeat and bump! The through stage from Paradise Bend to Marysville pulled in with the guard killed and "Whisky" Jim, the driver, creased on the head.

"Road-agents again," he explained simply. This was the tenth time he had been stopped.

An hour later Bill Stahl, Sheriff of Sunset County, arrived and posted notices to the effect that the Territory would pay one thousand dollars apiece for the delivery, dead or alive, of the bandits who were operating in Sunset County. The Wells-Fargo Company duplicated the offer.

At Sheriff Rule's home, Johnny interviewed both Rule and Sheriff Stahl, but learned nothing more of the road-agents.

"Yeah, she sounds a heap interestin'. I guess I'll just go after that reward," he concluded.

Then entered smilingly Racey Dawson and Telescope Laguerre.

"We heard yuh through the window," they announced, "an' we decided to go with yuh, so we can sort o' look after yuh an' horn in on the two thousand wheels a bandit."

So they laid their plans. The sheriffs were to tell nothing of the scheme to any one, but just to greet the three casually as before. Two of the trio were to secure jobs as stray men, probably from "Scotty" Mackenzie, of the Flying-M; the third was to work at the stage depot. Already they were counting the reward-money.

Two days later the three met again and Johnny Ramsay took the road to Paradise Bend, the others to follow at intervals.

As he was picking his way along a difficult trail three mornings later, three shots cracked ahead of him. Where the trail turned into a grove of cottonwoods he found their cause—two dead men in a buckboard, and a dead horse. In the distance three riders were rapidly fording a stream. Johnny aimed and fired, but the horses, two chestnuts and a blacktail dun, were already out of range.

The murdered men he found had been robbed. Just as Johnny discovered the place from which they had been ambushed, hoofbeats sounded on the

road. He drew into the bushes. When the carefully dressed rider drew up, Johnny stepped from his place of concealment. Together they examined the bodies. Then the stranger suggested:

"We might as well go back to the Bend together. They've got too much of a start to do anything."

"Howdja know I'm goin' to the Bend, anyhow?" questioned Johnny.

"This is how," came the answer and he stared into the twin-barrels of the stranger's Derringer.

Johnny, disarmed, riding in front, the Derringer in the rear, they rode to Paradise Bend.

WHEN the town was reached the captor announced he had caught a road-agent red-handed.

"I'll getcha my rope!" yelled a citizen and the crowd pressed forward.

While Johnny was trying to yell his explanations, "Soapy" Ragsdale and Jim Mace, two old friends of his, edged their way forward and took their places by his side.

"I got my finger on the trigger," Ragsdale announced, pointing his carbine. "I don't like this here bellerin' for ropes an' I don't give a —— who knows it."

The crowd remained at a respectful distance.

Then arrived the marshal who ordered a trial and picked Dave Dusenbury's store as the court-room.

Constituting himself judge, the marshal chose twelve jurors, although he declared "a jury ain't really necessary," and proceeded to the trial.

While every window of the store was jammed with people, Harry Slay, the man who had brought Johnny into town, told his story, twisting fact and argument so cunningly that the two appeared as one.

But the light came to Johnny. By working cartridges through his rifle he proved that if he had fired the shots, the shell cases must be nicked, for all which passed through his gun came out that way. Next he declared that the empty shells, if they had been thrown out, would be found in the ambush—without a nick. One nicked shell would be where he had thrown it after shooting at the horsemen.

In conclusion he declared that if the bullets were dug out of the wounds they would be found to be 38's while his were 45-90's.

But the marshal and jury did not want to lose time investigating. A murmur arose. The marshal coughed, fingered his six-shooter and said:

"Gents, y'all heard what Harry Slay said. Y'all heard what this feller said. What do you say?"

"Yes, gents, what do you say?" drawled a voice from the doorway.

Scotty Mackenzie and eight of the Flying-M riders pressed in and stood by Johnny's side.

"Gents, yuh was goin' to say somethin'. What was it?" reminded Scotty.

"They was a-goin' to adjourn over to Yaller Medicine Crick to look at some evidence," put in the marshal.

"Oh yeah," said Scotty. "Guess we'll trail along. Yuh see I was standin' in that doorway a good ten minutes before anybody saw me."

CHAPTER VII

SCOTTY MACKENZIE

"THERE'S a spent shell!" cried one of Scotty's outfit, a bristle-haired young man named "Swing" Tunstall.

He handed the shell to Scotty, and the latter held it up for the marshal to see.

"Yuh'll notice Swing found her on the buckboard side o' that cottonwood about ten feet off the road," Scotty pronounced in a dry tone. "An' here's Johnny's twin scratches down the side. Le's go look for the heel-marks."

The presence of the heel-marks in the soft ground having been verified, twenty men, including the jurors, Scotty and the marshal, climbed the steep slope to where the two boulders snuggled between their guardian pines.

Behind the boulders they found three spent shells—two 45-90's and one 40-65.

"Not scratched a —— bit, none of 'em," observed Scotty. "Dug that bullet out o' Homan yet, Cal?" he called to an earnest seeker after light on the trail below.

"In a minute," replied Cal. "My knife done touched her all right, but she's kind o' behind a bone. She's a-comin'."

She came and was duly examined by the multitude.

"40-65 bullet," was Scotty's remark. "So Johnny didn't fire that cartridge. An' he didn't fire them two unscratched 45-90's neither. I guess that pretty near settles the cat-hop."

"Shore it does," the marshal affirmed with forced heartiness. "I guess the jury's satisfied. Gents, yo're——"

"But I ain't satisfied—yet," interrupted Scotty smoothly. "Yuh forget Johnny seen three jiggers cross the creek. We'll slide down and look at the tracks. An' while we're about it, we might just as well find out where they tied their hosses while they was bushwhackin' Old Man an' Bill. All them li'l things help like ——, yuh know," he added plaintively.

No one was deceived by his tone. All accompanied him without demur. After quartering the ground for fifteen minutes Scotty and his followers halted in a pocket among the pines.

"Here's where they tied their hosses,"

announced Scotty. "Three hosses, an' by the looks o' the ground they was standin' here a while. Le's go down to the creek."

They traced the tracks from the pocket to the creek, up the opposite bank, and out across the flats.

"I guess this is most enough," said Scotty, halting a hundred yards from the water.

"She was enough before," the hard-featured Tom assured him. "——, I guess we know when everythin's all right."

"I guess—maybe—yuh do," was Scotty's drawling indorsement.

But Scotty was not looking at Tom. The hard blue stare was directed straight into the pale eyes of Harry Slay. The latter promptly smiled in a most engaging fashion.

"This is fine," he declared without hesitation. "I am delighted that matters have turned out as they have, and that your friend gets a Scotch verdict—the benefit of the doubt, in other words."

"Benefit of the doubt?" Thus Scotty, softly, almost tenderly.

"A slip of the tongue," beamed Slay, with a flash of white teeth. "I should have said unquestionably cleared of the charge against him."

"Yeah, yuh should have," said Scotty. "Funny how folks don't always think o' the right thing to say."

"Surely is," agreed the good-humored Slay. "Have a cigar?"

"Cigarets kind o' suit my health better," parried Scotty, fishing out the makings.

"Better stick to 'em then," advised Slay, and began to walk away from there.

Swing Tunstall looked at his friend Jack McCall and rubbed a solemn chin. Jack thrust his tongue into his cheek. Later, in the bunk-house, they would recount with delight how their employer ran a blazer on Harry Slay and forced that plump person to say what he had not intended to say.

Scotty gave no evidence that he realized what he had done. Mildly he asked Tunstall for a match, lit his cigaret, and plodded slowly back to the buckboard with the others.

"Where's Harry?" queried a citizen named Carey.

"Started back," replied Cal Mason, busy at the buckboard. "Pass the rope under his arms, Tug, an' I'll tie 'em to the back of the seat."

"Naw," objected Tug, "put 'em both on the floor. S'pose their feet do hang over—what's the difference?"

"They ain't room, I tell yuh!" avowed Cal heatedly. "They's only room for Bill Homan on the floor. Old Man's gotta sit alongside o' yuh. Aw, whatcha beefin' about—he ain't bleedin' even a li'l bit! Lemme drive then. I can drive yore hoss better'n you, anyhow," Cal added with consummate tact.

Tug drove.

On the ride back to the Bend, Johnny contrived to maneuver Scotty to the tail of the cavalcade.

"Gotta fix my cinches," Johnny announced suddenly, and, catching Scotty's eye, motioned rearward with his head.

THE quick-witted Scotty halted his horse as Johnny slid to the ground. When Johnny swung up the others were three hundred yards ahead. Scotty grinned at Johnny, and Johnny grinned at Scotty. They liked each other very well, these two. Johnny knew better than to thank Scotty for coming to his rescue. He merely mentioned that Scotty had picked a good day on which to ride to town. Scotty "guessed" that this was the truth, and the subject was closed.

"Yuh wanna hire two stray men, don't yuh, Scotty," Johnny began abruptly.

"Who? Me? Two stray men? Whatcha talkin' about, Johnny? This Territory ain't Texas."

"Yeah, but yuh want two stray men just the same. Yo're losin' a lot o' hosses lately, an' yuh don't like it nohow."

"It's shore makin' me madder'n ——," said Scotty, falling into the spirit of the occasion. "What else?"

"An' yuh hire me'n Telescope."

"Laguerre!"

"Shore."

"Telescope Laguerre," chuckled Scotty, his face wrinkling with delight. "I'll shore be glad to see Telescope again."

"Yo're hirin' us won't cost yuh nothin', but nobody's gotta know that. To them she's forty a month all reg'lar."

"Shore. G'on. Don't stop. I can see times a-comin'."

"Our bein' stray men thisaway 'll give us a chance to ride the range so careless an' so free without folks askin' questions. They's three of us. While two is ridin'

'round the other'll get a job in the Bend—at the stage corral, if he can. If he can't, some'ers else where the hearin's good."

"I'm beginnin' to see," drawled Scotty. "I'm shore beginnin' to see. Where yuh goin' to start in?"

"Right where them two fellahs was downed. I'm no trailer, myself, but Telescope is shore one li'l he-angel when it comes to readin' sign, an' I'm gamblin' he can find out somethin' from the hoof-marks of the hosses them hold-ups rode. If only she don't rain."

"She won't," declared Scotty. "If she rains inside o' six weeks, I'll eat my shirt. Them hoof-marks is there to stay. When yuh goin' to send for Telescope?"

"Telescope an' Racey Dawson are on the way now. Telescope'll drift in day after tomorrow likely, an' Racey a couple o' days after."

"Huh? Day after tomorrow?"

"Shore, day after tomorrow."

"Say, how long you been plannin' this thing anyhow?"

"Since the stage pulled in to Farewell after the Hogback hold-up an' Bill Stahl posted rewards for them bandits at a thousand per. The Wells-Fargo made the same play. I figure she beats punchin' cattle."

"An' yuh come north special for that?" Scotty's eyes took on a terrier-like keenness.

"Shore, I did come north for that," replied Johnny. "Whadda yuh guess?"

"Seen Dor'thy?" was Scotty's apparently irrelevant remark.

"Yeah—say, do yuh s'pose I come all the way here to see her?"

"Why not?" yapped Scotty defensively. "She's one nice li'l gal, an' any gent—any gent, I tell yuh, Johnny—had ought to be proud to ride from hell to breakfas' an' back again to see her."

"I dunno as my hoss'd stand the trip," doubted Johnny.

"Yuh know what I mean. Yuh know plenty well what I mean. An' I don't give a —— what yuh say, Johnny, I'm bettin' yuh was thinkin' o' Dor'thy all the time yuh was plannin' to come up here after them hold-ups. Shore yuh was, an' natural too. ——, yes. Whatcha wigglin' 'round in the saddle for?"

" 'Cause you make me sick!"

"I'll make yuh a heap sicker, soon. Dor'thy's one nice gal."

"Yuh've done said that twice."

"O' course," pursued the unheeding Scotty, "I don't cotton to ladies as a rule, I've knowed several one time an' another, an' they're bad medicine. Yessir, I've had experience, I have, an' I've been gun-shy of 'em ever since. But Dor'thy Burr an' her ma ain't nothin' like the ord'nary run o' female women. Them two are reg'lar shore-enough *folks*, y'betcha. Why, I knowed Dor'thy when she wasn't knee-high to a pack-rat an' said 'Gug-gug' when she wanted to play with yore watch. Busted mine three times, she did, an' throwed it in the stove final.

"The first time she ever rode a hoss in her life was on my saddle with her li'l legs a-stickin' straight out an' a-yellin' to make the hoss go. An' look at her now. They ain't a better-lookin' gal, bar none, north o' Texas. I ask yuh, is they? No, they ain't. O' course, on forty a month yuh hadn't really ought to ask her, but after yuh've hawg-tied a bandit or two an' got the money then fly at it. Shore. Wish I was twenty years younger. I'd show yuh, y'betcha."

"Yuh'd shore be welcome to," grunted Johnny. "I ain't out to get married—not yet awhile. An' I'm surprised at yuh, Scotty, a man o' yore age, talkin' this way."

"Why, yuh pore conceited cow-wrastler!" blazed Scotty. "Yuh don't guess I meant what I said about Dor'thy an' you, do yuh? I was funnin' yuh. If yuh had any sense yuh'd see it, but that's just the way, young folks nowadays ain't got the brains they had when I was a boy. No, sir, not by a jugful they ain't, an' you ain't in partic'lar, Johnny. Not but what y' ain't a right good feller. I like yuh quite a lot. I dunno why exactly. But you ain't the man for Dor'thy Burr. She's a friend o' mine."

"Ain't I a friend o' yours?" demanded Johnny, somewhat injured as to his feelings.

"Shore y'are," admitted Scotty. "But this is different, a heap different. Yuh don't shape up like a married man, Johnny."

"I'd like to know why I couldn't."

"I thought yuh said yuh wasn't out to get married."

"I mean I'd like to know why I couldn't if I wanted to."

"I guess—maybe—yuh could. They say nothin's impossible. But it wouldn't do. ——, no. Not a-tall nohow. Just you forget it an' think o' somethin' else. Besides, it might be right dangerous."

"Dangerous?"

"Dangerous."

Scotty wore an air of supreme indifference. He began to hum a little song.

"Nemmine dronin' no tunes. Whadda yuh mean by 'dangerous'?"

"I was just thinkin' o' Harry Slay."

"Harry Slay! Him! What's he got to do with Dorothy Burr?"

"Oh, nothin', nothin'. How's Jack Richie makin' out?"

"Nemmine Jack Richie either. He'll keep better'n that —— tune. What's all this here mystery about Dorothy an' Slay?"

"It ain't no mystery. He slimes 'round Dor'thy all the time. Goes ridin' with her a lot, an' most every week the stage freights in a big box o' candy for him for her—all the way from St. Paul, too. Why, say, *he even picks flowers out in the woods for her.*"

Had Slay been in the habit of constructing bouquets of rattlesnakes Scotty's tone could not have expressed more horrified disgust. Johnny was disgusted, too, but in a different way.

"Who is this man Slay?" he demanded.

"He owns the Broken Dollar S'loon—runs six games in there. I thought yuh knew."

"He's new since I was here."

"Yeah, sifted in less'n two year ago, bought the Savin' Grace off Riley, renamed her the Broken Dollar, an' waded into business. I'll say this for him: he's an educated gent, a stayer over any distance with the women, a cold proposition with the men, an' I ain't got no more use for him than I have for a toad. Not so much. Yuh can squash a toad."

"An' he's goin' to see Dorothy?"

"Whadda you care?"

"I don't—only—only it don't seem right somehow. Not that she's anythin' to me more'n a friend, but he's a pup, that fellah."

"Shore, but how yuh goin' to stop it? He's acted real decent—so far. An' if yuh plug him or somethin' Dor'thy mightn't like it. Yuh can't never tell about a woman."

"But he ain't the gent to be hangin' 'round a nice girl like that. He's got a bad eye."

"Two of 'em, an' I ask yuh again, what yuh goin' to do? She's a free country."

"Yeah, but—why don't yuh talk to Mis' Burr?"

"An' get a jawin'? Do I look like a fool?"

"Sometimes," said Johnny, "but y' ain't to blame for that. I think it's yore complexion or somethin'. Leave my hoss alone! Quit it now! We was talkin' all friendly about Dorothy an' yuh gotta go raisin' —— around. What are we goin' to do?"

"We?"

"Shore we?"

"An' do what, huh?"

"Show Mister Slay he ain't wanted."

"Not me, Johnny. I'm shore too old for them kind o' fireworks. It's yore play."

"Seein' as nobody else wants to pick up a hand," Johnny observed with sarcasm, "I guess maybe it is."

Scotty said nothing. Having sown the seed he was content to await the harvest.

"Goin' out tonight?" inquired Johnny, when the scattered lights of Paradise Bend winked at them across the night.

"Guess not," said Scotty. "Too late. We'll go tomorrow."

"I'll be out later—with Telescope," observed Johnny. "Not much use goin' out till after he comes. Besides, we gotta look at them tracks."

"Shore," concurred Scotty, grinning into the darkness. "They's all kinds o' reasons for yuh to stay in the Bend," he added under his breath.

"Whatcha say?" Johnny questioned suspiciously.

"Talkin' to the hoss."

FROM the windows and doorways of store, saloon and dance hall, flaring fans of yellow light lay across the sidewalks and stretched with diminishing intensity into the dust of the street. In the How Come You So Dance Hall two fiddlers were dispensing the heartsome strains of the "Arkansas Traveler" and heavy boots and light slippers were scuffling and sliding over the floor. An intoxicated gentleman was roaring the "Days of Forty-Nine" in the Three Card, and from the Jacks Up came the merry cries of the bartender and the proprietor as they strove to eject an unwelcome customer.

"Good li'l town," was Scotty's comment.

"All o' that," said Johnny, watching with admiring interest the unwelcome customer issue from the Jacks Up, skitter across the

sidewalk, and strike the street on the back of his neck.

"Lookit, lookit!" he urged delightedly, prodding Scotty.

"Yeah, that's Lotta Wallace," said Scotty, who was looking in the opposite direction. "Kind o' fancy, ain't she?"

"Huh? Who?" puzzled Johnny, thinking of the unwelcome customer.

"She'll strike the light again in a shake," Scotty continued to stare across the street, and Johnny, following with his eyes, got the range in time to see a woman step into the light from the doorway of the Golden Rule —a woman of dark and brilliant beauty, whose alluring black gown revealed and emphasized the charm of throat and shoulders, shoulders that should have been covered by the white shawl she trailed over a bare and perfect forearm.

Johnny watched the slim figure shuttling through the light and darkness of the street till it disappeared within the entrance of the Broken Dollar.

"Lookout?" was his question.

"Sometimes," Scotty told him. "But mostly she spins the wheel. She's Slay's sister, Mis' Lotta Wallace, an' a widow—she says. Yuh can't tell, it might be true. Me, I always like to look at her. She makes me think o' when I was a bar'foot kid back East in MacPherson an' the circus come to town an' for the first time in my life I seen a leopard. Yessir, it's shore amazin' how Mis' Wallace reminds me o' that leopard."

"Did she come here with Slay?"

"Yep—all the way from Cheecawgo—if yuh believe what they say. Me personal I got a idea they're a long time from Lake Michigan—a long, long time. They was nothin' tenderfooty about either of 'em when they come. Yessir, a gent don't learn to pull a gun like Slay can pull her, back East. It ain't a city trick. An' that Lotta gal was born on a hoss.

"Johnny, I seen her ride Dan Smith's pitcher one day. Which that wall-eyed cayuse gave her all he knowed from sunfishin' to changin' ends an' djuh think she pulled leather? Nary a pull. She stuck to him like grim death to a dead nigger an' loped him through town at the finish like nothin' had happened. But just the same," he added hastily, "she reminds me o' that leopard."

"Yeah," said Johnny, thinking of something else. "An' so Slay's been here about two years, huh? Was it before or after he come that they had the first hold-up?"

"Aw ——, yo're ropin' at the wrong cow, Johnny!" declared Scotty. "I don't like Harry a-tall, but I'll say he ain't in them hold-ups. Why, every single hold-up 'ceptin' this last one he's been here in town. I know it, 'cause I thought o' him that way once, an' I took the trouble to find out. Whoever they are, Harry Slay ain't one of 'em. Le's cross over, Johnny. Yo're stayin' at the hotel with me tonight."

CHAPTER VIII

DOROTHY BURR

DOROTHY BURR was lining pie-pans when Johnny Ramsay stuck his head through the kitchen doorway.

"You're a nice one," was her response to his greeting. "Here I waited up half the night expecting you'd come and tell me everything was all right, and you didn't. And I had to hear it all from Mis' Mace this morning. Lot of consideration you have for your friends, I must say."

She stared at him with resentful eyes.

"But, ma'am," he protested, reddening slightly at her naive announcement, "it was late when we rode in—almost midnight."

"I sat up till one."

"If I'd only knowed! But not knowin', I done what I thought was best. I just brought yore hoss back. He's in the corral now. I'm shore obliged to yuh for lendin' him to me, an' for takin' care o' mine for me. Which that li'l red hoss was shore dead-beat."

"Dead-beat!" She smiled whimsically at the recollection. "I guess he was. The poor chap tried to lie down twice between Main Street and here. He's all right now. He was trying to kick Twinkles when I watered them this morning."

Dorothy pushed back a falling lock of brown hair with a floury hand, and reached for the bowl of filling. She had a dab of flour on the bridge of her pretty nose, her waist was open at the neck, and her rolled-up sleeves made manifest the dimples in her attractive elbows. She looked a very delectable young person, as she sat there, her smooth cheeks pink with the heat of the kitchen.

Johnny sat down on the door-sill, braced his toes against the jamb, and built himself the inevitable cigaret. He stared lazily across his humped knees at the lady. He did not find her in the least hard to look at. She was handsomer than she used to be, he told himself. No two ways about it, she certainly filled a fellow's eye.

"What's that?" she asked, raising dark eyes to his.

"I—I didn't say nothin'," denied Johnny, going red to the ears. "She—she's a nice day."

"I beg your pardon. I thought you said something about eyes."

"Who? Me? Nun-no, ma'am."

"All right." Indifferently.

"Come to think of it, maybe now I did say somethin' about eyes," he observed, imbued with sudden daring. "I was just thinkin' how yore eyes are a plumb dark brown, almost black, an' yore eyebrows the same, an' yore hair is a li'l lighter, an' yet they all kind o' match."

She gazed at him with parted lips, the aforesaid almost black eyebrows inquiringly arched. Then she smiled adorably and spooned up some more filling.

"The wonders of nature," she twinkled at him. "Keep your eyes open and you'll learn something new every day. You never used to be so observant."

"My eyesight's gettin' better," was his dry comment.

"I know," she said, leveling the spoon at him, "you've been reading novels. You're getting romantic. You stop it, do you hear? Eyebrows and eyes and hair, indeed!"

She sniffed quite audibly.

"But they look so kind o' — kind o' pretty," he protested. "I was just tellin' yuh. Why, ma'am, even that smear o' flour on yore nose looks nice."

"Never mind about my nose," said she, rubbing the feature in question vigorously with the corner of her apron. "Of course I know I have a certain element of charm, as it were. My perfectly good mirror tells me that. But it isn't at all necessary for you to tell me about. I don't like it, and I won't have it."

"Won't yuh?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Darn the man! I declare, when it comes to fool questions you're worse than a brat! What you need is a little exercise, and what I need is some fresh water. The pail's in that corner. Do you think you can find the well without being led to it by the hand?"

"I know I can't," he declared promptly. "Besides, yuh need some fresh air. This kitchen's kind o' hot. C'mon out."

"After. Get a move on with that water, and stop your nonsense."

When Johnny had gone, Dorothy sat looking through the open window at the green and distant Government Hills. There was a tender little smile on her lips. At the sound of his returning step she went on with her pie-making.

"Where's yore ma?" he asked, suddenly bethinking himself of Mrs. Burr as he set the full pail in the corner.

"She's over at Mis' Acker's on Jack Creek."

"I thought you said yuh done sent Sammy Barnes for her," said he, recollecting what Dorothy had told the marshal the previous afternoon.

Dorothy giggled.

"I sort of told a fib," she confessed. "I didn't really send for ma. You see, I knew Scotty and some of his boys would be fencing in that quicksand at Wagon Slue on the Dogsoldier yesterday, so I sent Sammy for Scotty instead. But I thought Dan Smith and the rest of that mob had better keep right on believing as long as possible that they had nearly two hours in which to try you and—and—instead of the thirty minutes or so necessary for the ride to Wagon Slue and back."

"I know what yore 'an'—an' ' means," said he soberly. "They was shore out to hang me. They'd 'a' done it, if it hadn't been for you."

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed, sliding the pies into the oven and kicking the door shut. "Jim Mace and Soapy were there. I didn't really do anything."

"I'm thinkin' different," he told her earnestly, took a step toward her, and paused, overcome by sudden shyness. "Cuc—call me Johnny, will yuh?"

Dorothy deliberately turned her back on him and crossed the room to the tiny mirror hanging beside the china-closet. Here she busied herself in pulling and patting her coiffure into shape. Head cocked on one side, she surveyed the effect.

Johnny scraped an uncomfortable foot. He thought he had made her angry, and

mentally called himself a fool. Yet at the time, his request seemed a natural one to make.

DOROTHY turned, still without looking at him, walked to the table, reached for a can of peas and the can-opener, and proceeded to travel 'round the top of the can. When the peas had been neatly slid into a double-boiler and the can thrown out the lady fixed Johnny with a cool and tantalizing eye. The young man was now wishing himself elsewhere. But to retire gracefully was beyond his powers. He was perspiring a little. Dorothy smiled the peculiar smile of the entomologist about to impale a rare insect on a large pin.

"How long have you known me?" she inquired coldly.

"Three—three years," stuttered Johnny.

"I think not," she contradicted. "You haven't seen me for at least two years."

"But the year before I seen quite a lot of yuh," defended Johnny.

"Three times," enumerated she with increasing chilliness of demeanor.

"It was more'n that," he insisted.

"It was not. Three times exactly—no more, no less. And I don't believe you said a dozen words to me during any of the three times."

"Oh, ma'am, yo're mistaken!" Johnny's tone was piteously horror-stricken.

Her lips twitched.

"I am not mistaken," she insisted. "I am never mistaken—in anything I may do. Under the circumstances, having known me such a short time and all that, you know, don't you really think it's the least bit nervy to ask permission to call me by my first name?"

"It'd be worse if I called yuh that without askin' yuh," said he matter-of-factly.

"Answer my question?" The dark eyes held him.

"Y-yes, ma'am, o' course it would," he affirmed hastily. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean—I guess I'll go now."

"Why not wait a moment? I haven't quite finished."

"You've made it more'n plain, ma'am."

Nevertheless Johnny halted on his way to the door.

"Have I, Mister Blind Man? I was just about to say that I think it would be very nice indeed to call you Johnny. I've been wondering how soon you'd ask me."

"You have! Then what did yuh make all that row for?"

"Just to tease you. You're so easily teased—even for a boy."

"Boy!" he frowned.

"Oh, very well, Mister Methuselah. How's that?"

"Well, I ain't no gran'pa, but I ain't a kid neither. I've been roamin' up an' down this vale o' tears a long, long time."

"My, what a lot you must know!" She stared at him, round-eyed.

"Aw, leave me alone," he begged. "I can't talk like you can, an' yuh know it. Remember, I'm just a young fellah tryin' hard to get along. I may make mistakes now an' later, but outside o' that, my heart beats reg'lar all same alarm-clock."

"I know," she said seriously, "in some ways you're almost human. You may call me Dorothy, if you like."

"Thanks," he observed drily. "I do like Dorothy. Has kind of a smooth sound, ain't it? Yessir, I shore always did like that name Dorothy. 'Spect I'll be usin' it quite a lot from now on."

"Take care you don't strain your throat," she answered solemnly, then promptly dazzled him with a radiant smile. "Reach me down a can of tomatoes from the top shelf, will you—Johnny?"

"All right, Dorothy."

There was more than joy in his grin as he brought her the tomatoes.

"A whole can o' tomatters!" the disapproving voice of Scotty Mackenzie exclaimed from the doorway. "An' a whole can o' peas! An' a skillet full o' hashed Hogans an' ham! I ain't namin' no names, but they's such a thing as havin' a healthy appetite an' they's such a thing as bein' a hawg. Not meanin' nothin' or nobody in partic'lar, o' course."

"Of course not, old-timer, we understand perfectly," Dorothy assured him. "You're merely shedding sunshine in your own sweet way. Johnny, while you're setting a place for yourself at the table set another for the old gentleman with the whiskers."

"I didn't know I was a-goin' to stay?" Johnny strove to inject the correct degree of surprise into his tone.

"Yuh didn't, huh?" cackled Scotty. "That's a good one, that is. Just as if yuh haven't been sittin' 'round all mornin' with yore tongue hangin' out an' yore

mouth open a-honin' for an invite. Can't fool me. I know."

"Is that so?" snarled Johnny. "An' if I was she's none o' yore business."

"You bet she's my business. First thing I know one o' you young fellers 'll be stealin' my gal away, an' I ain't a-goin' to let nothin' like that happen, not while I have my health, y'betcha. What a fine an' dandy color yuh got this mornin', Dor'thy. I just noticed it."

The terrible old man smirked shamelessly at the two of them, straddled a chair and sailed his hat into a far corner.

"Yeah, yo're shore as nice-lookin' as a li'l red wagon with that color an' all," he remarked after a space devoted to the rolling of a cigaret.

"You leave my color alone," Dorothy told him, forking over the sizzling ham, "or I won't feed you."

"Can't scare me that way," declared Scotty tranquilly. "Yuh know I never eat nothin' here. I don't dast. If I did, I wouldn't have no appetite for ranch chuck, an' that's whatever."

"I merely wished to be polite," sniffed disdainful Dorothy.

"That's all right. I don't mind. Be as polite as yuh like, Johnny, while Dor'thy is wrastlin' that ham 'round the pan s'pose you'n me traipse over to the corral. I wanna show yuh somethin' on my saddle."

At that particular moment, a saddle was not Johnny's idea of something to look at. He greatly preferred remaining with Dorothy. He accompanied Scotty in silence.

"Yo're a fine detective," remarked Scotty, as they approached the Burr corral.

"Who said I was?" yapped Johnny.

"Not me," Scotty told him. "I always tell the truth. There, there, crack yore face an' smile. Yuh look so gloomersome yuh hurt my feelin's."

"—— yore feelin's. Whatcha wanna come mussin' 'round here for makin' fool remarks? She don't like 'em."

"Do you?"

"No, I don't."

"All right, all right, I was just wonderin'. It shore beats —— how a well-meanin' gent gets tromped on nowadays. It wasn't like that when I was a kid back East in Macpherson. No sirree, a pore ol' feller like me was respected in them days."

Scotty gurgled out a sob and affected to wipe away a tear.

"Yuh got somethin' to say," accused Johnny. "Y'always have when y'act more like a fool than usual. Spit her out."

"Spit her out!" groaned Scotty. "Such language! An' my Johnny raised a Christian! Djuh know where you'll go when you die, huh? You'll go to hell, that's where yuh'll go. Yessir, yuh'll fry. An' it'll be yore own fault. Gawd knows I've warned yuh till my neck's as dry as a covered bridge."

"Stop it!" commanded Johnny. "Whatcha goin' to say?"

"Yuh don't deserve to hear me say it. But me, I'm a forgivin' sport. Yessir, yuh won't find a more forgivin', Gawd-fearin' individjul in ten days' ride. Look, darlin', look at this."

Scotty Mackenzie fished something from the staple pocket on his cantle and held it toward Johnny. The latter took it wonderingly. "It" had once been a cheap silver watch. Now it was smashed beyond all hope of repair. It lay in Johnny's palm, a battered glassless case, sprouting a tangle of springs and cogwheels.

"Pretty li'l thing," commented Scotty.

"What's it for?" asked the puzzled Johnny.

"It ain't to keep time, but I thought maybe it might come in handy for yuh. I found it this mornin' right at the edge o' that quicksand I'm fencin' in at Wagon Slue."

"Well?"

"Turn her over."

Johnny obeyed. On the back of the case had been rudely scratched the initials "W. H."

"Bill Homan's initials," Scotty said quietly. "She's Bill's watch. I seen him look at her more'n once."

"An' yuh found it right at the edge o' the quicksand?"

"Shore, this mornin'."

"Did any o' yore outfit see it?"

"Nary a one. I was there three minutes ahead of 'em. An' here this thing lay. An' they wasn't a hoofmark or heelmark within forty feet. I'm tellin' yuh, Johnny, that this timepiece was throwed from across the river some time durin' the night. I know she was throwed 'cause she'd dug into the ground where she landed an' they was the mark o' how she'd rolled a li'l bit after landin'. An' I know she was throwed durin' the night 'cause if she'd been daylight the gent who slung her would never

have overthrowed an' missed the quicksand —shore. Course he was tryin' to sink the watch in the quicksand. What else?"

"I guess yo're right," concurred Johnny. "This watch shore goes to show the road-agents live in town or near it."

"Shore does," said Scotty Mackenzie.

CHAPTER IX

THE OTHER WOMAN

JOHNNY spent the afternoon with the hospitable Dorothy. The lady, as she tidily darned her father's socks, did not find Johnny an inspiring companion. She was neither accustomed to silence nor monosyllabic replies. She did not realize that her visitor was deep in a mathematical problem and making an exceedingly boggy ford of it. One and one will simply not make four no matter how many times you add or multiply them together. But Johnny was a persistent soul. He kept right on juggling Bill Homan's watch and his own suspicions till supper-time arrived and brought not the remotest hint of a satisfactory answer. Whereupon Johnny put on his hat and departed hotelward—to see a man.

"Yeah, he's a great friend o' mine," he told Dorothy. "I'd like to stay to supper, honest I would, but I got my own sinful pride, an' moochin' one meal a day off a lady is my limit. G'by."

Dorothy was left sputtering indignantly.

After supper, and a most indifferent meal it was in comparison with his dinner, he went over to Ragsdale's store and spent a tobacco-laden hour gossiping with Soapy. Jim Mace came in and the hour lengthened to two, and darkness fell, and it was night.

About ten o'clock Johnny stood up on his feet and yawned and stretched his long arms and legs till they cracked.

"I guess I'll kind o' take a look 'round town," he observed.

"Yeah," said Jim Mace, his eye lighting. "Is that a saloon across the street, or do my eyes deceive me?"

"You, Buster!" bawled Ragsdale. "C'min here an' take the store. I gotta go out on a li'l business."

Johnny's chief wish at that moment was to be about his own business. But his two friends did not seek to further that wish. Their earnest desire was to make it a large evening. To which end they hung Johnny and themselves over the bar of the Three Card and invited all and sundry to join them.

Johnny took a small part of one drink, after which, by the exercise of some strategy and all his natural agility, he contrived to escape through a rear window.

Standing well back and to one side of the splayed light from the window, Johnny heard Soapy and Jim call on him by name, and finally leave hurriedly by the front door.

"Let 'em hunt," he grinned. "Me, I got business."

He turned and looked along the irregular line of rear elevations. There was the Golden Rule—those three small glowing windows. Beyond it the houses were dark —private residences. Beyond these again was a dim light—the stage station. The dark bulk adjoining the stage station was, he knew, the rear of the Broken Dollar saloon and gambling-joint. There were six windows and a doorway in the rear wall of the Broken Dollar's back room, but all were dark.

"Slay's shore economical o' light in that back room," was Johnny's idle comment, as he started toward the stage company's corrals.

Johnny's objective was the Broken Dollar, which palace of chance he intended to surreptitiously approach from the other end of Main Street in order that his friends might not see him enter. For, should they see him, they would undoubtedly join him for his better protection. And Johnny wished to study his enemy unhampered by any one. That Slay was his most vindictive enemy was certain.

Why? Johnny could not understand why, and he intended to know why. That there was a certain element of risk attached to such close-range observation was true. But Johnny held to the cheerful opinion that hostilities would be riskier for Slay than for himself. As has been stated, Johnny was no marvel on the draw, but he possessed the ability to shoot accurately from the hip and through the bottom of his holster.

Johnny, skirting the rear of the stage company's two corrals, turned the corner of the second enclosure and fell over the projecting tongue of a tiltless freight-wagon. He arose, swearing softly and rubbing barked shins. His hat had fallen off. He felt about for it in the darkness, and swore

some more. He found it, and straightened just as the six windows in the back room of the Broken Dollar sprang into dusty radiance and a line of light showed yellowly at the bottom of the door.

"That door always did hang slanchways," observed Johnny, and thoughtfully edged behind the freight-wagon.

The door opened. For an instant the form of a woman was silhouetted against the light within, then the door closed behind her.

From the freight-wagon to the Broken Dollar was not more than seventy yards. Johnny heard the tink of a kicked tin can. A high heel clicked on a flat stone. A triangular splotch of white, gliding toward the freight-wagon, gradually took shape in the darkness. The white splotch reached the hind wheels, and Johnny heard the pleasant whisper of silk. Noiselessly Johnny scuttled to the safer shelter of the corral stockade. Body flattened against the posts, he waited.

The white splotch appeared at the fore wheels of the freight-wagon, and bobbed upward as the woman swung herself into the driver's seat.

Followed then the scratch of a drawn match. Johnny stared. The woman was lighting a cigaret. The pulsing flame revealed the face of Slay's sister, Mrs. Lotta Wallace.

At this close range her extreme beauty was more than ever apparent. The black hair growing low in a widow's peak on the forehead, the finely arched eyebrows, the long and curving eyelashes, the straight nose, the wide, full-lipped mouth, and the firm and pointed chin above the round, smooth throat and lovely shoulders, were individually sufficiently striking. In combination with each other the effect was bewildering. Yet Johnny was left cold. He remembered Scotty's leopard and became colder.

The situation was becoming impossible. The spark that was Mrs. Wallace's cigaret was not twenty feet distant. At any moment the lady might climb down, walk along the stockade and discover him. Naturally, she would think he was spying on her, and to be suspected of that by such an unknown quantity as Slay's sister was unthinkable. Why hadn't he kept on going along the stockade when he had the opportunity? Scotty was right. He was a fine detective, making mistakes this way. Johnny sweated clammily and breathed as little as possible.

Suddenly he saw Mrs. Wallace's cigaret describe a firefly arc in the air and strike the ground in a sputter of sparks. There was no sound of a movement on the driver's seat. Wasn't the woman ever coming down?

A long minute's silence, then a whisper—

"My God, what a life!"

The exclamatory sentence was followed by a pronounced sniffle, then more sniffles, and finally choky little sobs. It was evident that Mrs. Wallace was striving to fight down her emotion. But her grief was too great to be stifled easily.

"I wish I were dead!" she moaned, and began to cry quietly and steadily.

Johnny, hating himself acutely, began to itch between the shoulders. The itch wore itself out after centuries of torture and a cramp fastened sullenly on the muscles of his left foot. Something alive and many-legged fell off the stockade and landed on his shoulder. The something crawled along the shoulder to his neck and tickled his ear.

With infinite caution he raised a nervous hand, removed a night-riding spider and endeavored to drop the loathsome thing at a distance. With the perversity of vermin it clung whole-heartedly to his finger, and he was forced to slat it off against a post of the stockade, detaching in the process a loose piece of dry bark. The bark fell with a rustle. Johnny caught his breath, and tensed his muscles for a flying start. But the sound of weeping abated not.

Johnny took heart of hope and a long breath. The taking of the latter was injudicious. For many months dust of the corral, stirred into action by the hoofs of the stage-horses, had been sifting and settling behind that loose piece of bark. The fall thereof released an atomic cloud that, at the intake of the long breath, promptly smote the sensitive membrane of Johnny's nostrils.

Johnny gritted his teeth, violently rubbed his nose, and otherwise by main strength and a robust will contrived to suffocate the sneeze before it was born. He almost strangled in the effort, and was left with tear-wet eyes and throbbing temples. But he had made not the slightest sound. And Mrs. Wallace wept on forlornly.

Johnny's gambling spirit urged him to

take a chance on departure. Between spiders and itchings and incipient sneezes the locality was fast losing its charm. But knowledge of the many tin cans held him back. There was an ancient cast-off stove somewhere about, too. If he should fall over that!

Centuries became eons, and eons became eternity before there was an appreciable lessening of that distressful sobbing on the wagon-seat. Johnny's first-formed estimate of Mrs. Wallace had been gradually altering. By the time her sobs gave way to long-drawn gasping breaths his opinion utterly opposed that of Scotty. He could not understand how she could remind Scotty of a leopard. Why, she was just a little wretched girl, crying her heart out, and that was all. Johnny felt quite sorry for her. Which, could he have but known it, is a most dangerous feeling when the lady concerned is as beautiful as was Mrs. Wallace.

THERE WAS a deep sigh from the aforesaid lady, and then a rustling and a scraping as she swung down over the double-tree to the ground. White shawl trailing across one shoulder she headed back toward the Broken Dollar. Johnny stretched legs and arms in aching relief and dodged 'round the pole of the freight-wagon to where he could follow her with his eyes.

He saw her figure become one with the darkness and then reappear with magic-lantern abruptness under one of the lighted windows of the Broken Dollar. Here she halted, produced from her bosom a small glittering object, held it before her face, and dabbed at her features with an article the size and shape of a small apple.

"Powderin' her face, poor li'l thing," commented Johnny. "I'll bet her eyes are some swole."

The back door of the saloon opened. Slay stood in the doorway.

"Lotta! Lotta!" he called.

"Here I am," she replied, almost at his elbow. "There's no need to yell your head off."

"Didn't see you," he said crossly. "Come in here quick. What's the matter with you? Why did you leave the wheel?"

"Because I felt like it!" she flung back, smoothing a perfect eyebrow with the ball of her thumb.

"Oh, I see. Suppose you come in then—if you feel like it."

"When I feel like it, I will."

She powdered her nose again with maddening deliberation.

"Come in here at once!" The command lost most of its force because Slay pettishly stamped his foot.

"Of course, you frighten me to death when you do that," she observed sweetly. "Why don't you drag me in by the hair?"

"Are you coming in?"

"I meant to, but since you've been so pleasant, I think I'll go home."

Slay stepped back and slammed shut the door. Mrs. Wallace returned mirror and powder-puff to their hiding-place, blew a kiss at the closed door, and walked slowly 'round the corner of the building.

"Shore got a mind of her own, that one," remarked Johnny. "Maybe she ain't such a poor li'l thing after all."

Pondering the unexpectedness of woman, Johnny cautiously diagonaled across the open ground to where, beyond the outermost shack, Main Street became a trail. Here he turned townward and, walking leisurely, came to the Broken Dollar, pushed open the door, and entered.

The long wide barroom was filled with tobacco-smoke and customers. The tobacco-smoke hung in layers in the atmosphere. The customers hung in suspense upon the turn of the cards and the caprice of a tiny ball dancing within a sunken wheel of many pockets.

Johnny did not pause at the door. He walked without haste between the tables to the bar at the other end of the room. There were only three men standing at the bar. One was the hard-faced Tom Keen, he of the two guns, Ganey of the dyed mustache, and a sharp-featured citizen known as Spill Harper. These three turned and surveyed him as he approached. Johnny gave them stare for stare, fronted up to the bar, rang down a quarter and called for whisky. The bartender shoved forward a bottle and a glass. Johnny poured out a scant two fingers, cupped his left hand 'round the glass, and leaned sidewise against the bar.

His attitude was lazy and his demeanor careless, but his half-shut sardonic eyes missed no detail of what was passing under the hanging lamps in that big room. He perceived that fully half the men in the place were neglecting their play to watch him. Some of them nudged each other and whispered among themselves, but when his eyes

fell upon these they ceased nudging and whispering and affected an air of extreme unconcern.

As Johnny's gaze fell upon the roulette table he smiled slightly. He understood Slay's anger at Mrs. Wallace's defection. Harry Slay was behind the table now, and the patronage was slim. With his sister to spin the wheel roulette would have been the most popular game in the room.

The gambler's face as he dropped the ball and worked the lever was wooden. He paid and took in bets without once lifting his eyes above the level of the table. Abruptly he turned to a friend.

"Spin her, will you, Bill?" he asked. "I have a little matter of business to arrange."

"Shore," replied friend Bill, and Slay stepped out from behind the table and walked straight toward Johnny Ramsay standing at the door.

Johnny had not been expecting any such sudden move as this, but he was in readiness. The heel of his right hand just touched the butt of his gun. Slay's hands were swinging at his sides, but this meant nothing. Johnny had seen Slay throw down once before.

As Slay approached Johnny the room, following the hasty shuffling of folk intent on leaving the zone of fire, became as still as midnight in a church. Johnny wondered where Slay's bullet would make its little hole. He himself intended to put as many pieces of lead as he could into Slay's abdomen. Johnny had killed three men since beginning to punch cows for a living. But he had killed them in an impersonal way, that is, at long range, with a rifle. He had borne no special animosity against these men. He had shot them simply as a matter of course. They had been rustlers, outlaws of the range, wolves to be destroyed on sight. And he had not seen them die.

But here was a man he must shoot at close range with a six-shooter. How would it feel to perforate an enemy and watch him pass out under one's very eyes. It suddenly struck him that he himself would in all likelihood be too dead to observe with any thoroughness the demise of another. The idea tickled his sense of humor, and he chuckled audibly.

Not ten feet away Slay halted, his hands held well away from his sides.

"Looking for me?" Slay asked, his pale slanting eyes meeting Johnny's fixed gray stare.

"I never hunt trouble," replied Johnny.

"Any hard feelings?"

"Never use 'em."

"Have a drink?"

"Shore."

The bartender made ludicrous haste to serve the boss and Johnny. Eye to eye the two men drank off their liquor. Johnny, as etiquette required, called for another round. They drank again. Then Slay nodded to Johnny, mentioned that he would see him later, and went back to his roulette table. The incident was closed, and the spectators resumed their pursuit of pleasure with noisy avidity.

Johnny, standing alone at the bar—Tom Keen, Ganey and Spill Harper had gone elsewhere—sought to probe the true inwardness of the gambler's motive in seeking peace.

"Trying to make me believe he's willin' to be friendly," he reflected. "But he shore is a bigger man than I took him to be, comin' right out an' facin' it thisaway. Nerve an' slickness—he's got 'em both. An' yet not ten minutes ago he stamped his foot at his sister, which is shore one kid's trick."

CHAPTER X

THE LIGHT THAT LIES

THE following afternoon Johnny, ensconced on the Burr doorsill, saw Slay and his sister coming up the street. Slay, frock-coated in spite of the heat, was leading a saddled horse, and Mrs. Wallace, radiant in gray and old-rose, held a parasol between her complexion and the sun. She was talking animatedly to her brother.

"Here come some friends o' yores," Johnny announced, tapping the back of the chair on which Dorothy sat darning religiously.

"Who's with Harry?" she asked calmly.

"Yuh knowed he was comin'!" he accused.

"Why, of course," she told him with a quick sidewise glance. "We're going riding today."

"So that's why yuh've got yore boots on." Johnny was not in the least pleased, and his tone showed it.

"My dear man, what would you have me wear?"

"I don't mean yore boots. I mean yuh might 'a' told me."

"What?" she teased.

Johnny glared his displeasure at her levity. Dorothy smiled.

"What does it matter about me?" inquired Johnny bitterly. "I was only spendin' the afternoon. I'd like to know why yuh couldn't 'a' gone ridin' with me, Dorothy."

" 'You never asked me, sir, she said.' There, there, Johnny, you'll ruin your perfectly good features if you persist in frowning that way. Who's with Harry?"

"His sister." Glumly.

"She is?" Dorothy's dark eyes sparkled. She bit off a thread with a vicious click of white teeth. The color in her cheeks deepened. Johnny was totally oblivious to these manifestations of feminine interest. He was too busy feeling abused.

The Slay tribe arrived. The gambler and Johnny were gravely restrained in their greeting. Not so the ladies. They kissed each other with great fervor and "My dear" before and after, and bestowed compliments with a buttery lavishness.

The gambler introduced Johnny to Mrs. Wallace, and asked Dorothy if she was ready.

"Right away," she told him, reaching inside the doorway for her quirt. "Be with you in three shakes. You go on and saddle up."

Slay lifted his hat to his sister and Johnny and departed for the corral. Dorothy followed a moment later, after strictly enjoining Mrs. Wallace and Johnny to make themselves at home till she returned. Johnny trailed Dorothy with sulky eyes. He hated Slay. What right had the man to take Dorothy riding?

"Won't you?" Mrs. Wallace was saying.

"Won't I what?" He stared at her without friendliness.

"Won't you talk to me? I've already asked you three times."

She had closed her parasol and now stood with her hands clasped over the round handle. There was a talented patch of court-plaster on her left cheek-bone. Her lips were slightly parted and her eyes were warmly pleading. She was very lovely, and she wanted him to talk to her. What small hands she had. The prospect of a long afternoon, full of empty hours and shimmering heat, decided Johnny.

"Ma'am, I'd shore admire to talk to yuh," he declared solemnly.

"It's dear of you to say that," she said. "I know you don't mean it, but I really would like to make up to you for Dorothy's absence if—if I could and you'd let me."

This was spreading the jam rather thickly, but man is an obtuse animal. Johnny grinned.

"I guess now you an' I'd oughta get along together real well," was his hearty endorsement.

Mrs. Wallace smiled, and a fugitive dimple showed for an instant in her right cheek.

"Suppose we go over to my house," she suggested. "It's near the river, and there's almost always *some* breeze."

"That shore listens well," said Johnny. "Let's go."

They went. Half Main Street saw them go, and the whole town knew it ten minutes later.

"Just watch her grin at him!" urged Mrs. Mace, flattening a snubby nose against a window-pane in her kitchen.

"That's the first time I ever seen her out walkin' with a man," declared Mrs. Ragsdale. "Move over, dear. I can't see a thing. She's wearin' the gray again, ain't she? Makes her look hump-shouldered, don't it?"

"Shore does, an' that rose-color ain't fit for a sallow thing like her to wear. She hasn't color enough. Look! Look! See her walk close to him. The brazen creature!"

"I always knew she was a hussy for all her quiet ways. The cat!"

"Oh, she's a sly minx. They're the ones, Ella. The putty-faced things who act as if butter wouldn't melt in their mouths, they're the ones to look out for."

"She's skinny as a rail," contributed Mrs. Ragsdale, holding resolutely to the main road. "I'll bet her legs ain't thicker'n matches."

"Whose legs ain't thicker'n matches?" asked Jim Mace, entering at the moment.

"None of your business," his wife told him. "Didja see that widow woman an' Johnny Ramsay?"

"Y'betcha. Johnny always was a lucky jigger."

"Oh, is that so? Well, if you think so, Jim Mace, I'll just thank you to keep such opinions to yoreself, an' don't you forget it neither! C'mon, Ella, let's go in the side room. I believe she's takin' him home, an'

if they sit on the porch we can watch 'em fine."

But Mrs. Wallace and Johnny did not sit on the porch. The fascinating widow knew all about a small town, and she took her guest into the house. The puncher's eyes widened at sight of the sitting-room and its appointments. There were several water-colors and three small paintings on the walls. Above the door the mounted head of a buffalo bull faced a splendid Sioux war-bonnet hanging on the opposite wall. Chairs, broad and deep, a wide table, a long sofa covered with fat pillows, a book-case full of books, and a thick, soft carpet completed the picture. Even the sitting-room at the Bar-S was not so fine as this one. Johnny moved cautiously. Spurs are scratchy things.

Mrs. Wallace excused herself and vanished through a doorway hung with a pair of striped Zuñi blankets. Johnny slid across the carpet to the nearest chair. He sat, having care to his spurs, and absent-mindedly pulled out the makings. He remembered his manners as he was on the point of striking a match and disgustedly shot the white roll out of the window. He began to wish he hadn't come. It was no fun sitting alone this way. Where was Mrs. Wallace anyway?

At that moment she pushed aside the Zuñi blankets and came toward him, smiling delightfully. She was carrying a small tray. There were two tall glasses and a square bottle on that tray. Times immediately began to improve. Johnny's somber eye brightened.

"You may not like this," she said, holding out the tray. "It's something I invented myself. I call it Texas Pete."

Texas Pete was of a light brown color and both glasses were full of him. Johnny's fingers wrapped themselves 'round one of the glasses. Mrs. Wallace took the other, set the tray on the table, and sat down on the sofa. She tucked one leg under her, and swung the other child-fashion. Raising the glass to her lips, she looked at Johnny across the rim and sipped slowly.

Johnny did not sip slowly. He was not accustomed to drinking that way. He lowered the half-emptied glass to the arm of the chair and grinned cheerfully.

"Reg'lar shore 'nough drink," he assured her. "What's in it?"

She told him. He stared aghast at the tale of ingredients, and looked down at his glass with sudden respect.

"One more o' this here Texas gent an' I'd shore push the bridge over," said he. "No, ma'am, no more. I'll just finish this an' call it a day."

"You're not going yet!" she exclaimed piteously. "Oh, you mustn't! I'll be so lonely if you do."

Once more the jam and the trowel. Such flattery would have held Johnny even if he had intended going, which he hadn't.

"I wasn't thinkin' o' goin'," he told her with an ease born of Texas Pete and the lady's blandishments. "Can I smoke?"

"Surely. Try one of mine."

He did, and she taught him how two cigarets may be simultaneously lit by the one match. Besides being economical this method of starting a smoke has a charm all its own. Of course it necessitated Johnny's moving to the sofa. He did not return to the chair. With every passing minute he was feeling more at home. He almost forgot that the lady's brother was his enemy. He watched her leaning back among the puffy cushions. Her eyes were deep as wells. Then it suddenly struck him that for the last hour he had been doing most of the talking. She had asked questions, apparently casual questions, but they required lengthy answers.

"Well," he said with a slight laugh, "I'm shore warmed up to-day. Bet I've talked an arm off yuh."

"Don't stop," she begged, in her earnestness leaning forward and clasping her hands 'round her silken knee. "I'm enjoying it so. I just love to hear how men do things."

"Do yuh?"

"Of course. Tell me some more about those Indians. Did they keep right on stealing horses?"

"Nobody keeps right on stealin' hosses, ma'am. He steals one hoss too many an' gets stretched. An' them Injuns did an' they was."

"I suppose it always turns out that way," said she softly.

"Yes'm, an' it's always that one hoss too many does it," he moralized. "If a gent would only be satisfied. But 'No,' he says, 'when it comes to stealin' hosses I'm the original Solomon forty ways from the Jack,' an' out he prances, foolish an' certain, an' gloms on to that extra cayuse. It's the same in everythin' else thataway, ma'am—

killin', hold-ups, an' all. They ain't no difference."

"And yet nothing seems to stop the road-agents in this county." She was looking up into his face with brilliant eyes.

"No," he admitted, "they seem to be playin' in right good luck. But you wait. Maybe yuh'll have to wait a year or two, maybe longer, but you wait. They'll be got, ma'am."

"I'm sure I hope so," she declared, leaning back and patting her hair with long, slim fingers. "I had some silk for a gown coming all the way from Chicago, and the stage was stopped that trip, and it was raining, and they ripped open the package and left it there in the mud. I could have wept when the agent told me. My pretty yellow silk ruined! I hope they do catch them."

"That's shore too bad about yore dress," he sympathized. "Likely them bandits didn't know what it was, or they wouldn't 'a' touched it."

HE WAS watching a tiny pulse on the side of her round throat. He hadn't noticed it before. The little telltale was throbbing steadily and fast. Yet the color in her cheeks had not altered a shade. It was her own color, too. He had made sure of that at the cigaret-lighting.

"I wish you were the sheriff or a deputy or something," said she.

"Me? Why?"

"Because I believe you could catch them. I believe you could do more than this idiotic sheriff."

"He's doin' his best, ma'am. Ain't yuh takin' the loss o' that dress mighty hard?"

"Oh, it isn't the dress. It's the idea of these bandits being able to do what they please. They make a perfect joke of the sheriff and his men. Oh, if I were a man, I'd get out and do something! I'd give these road-agents a run for their money. You said yourself there's always one horse too many. I'd make the Fane job that one horse. There are two thousand dollars apiece offered for those bandits. Did you know that?"

"I'd heard." He nodded a grave head.

"It would certainly be worth almost any man's while. I should think you'd try it out." The brilliant eyes had narrowed ever so slightly, and the little pulse was beating quite rapidly now.

"I ain't a fool," he said seriously. "I never hunt trouble, not never. An' two thousand dollars ain't enough for me to bet my life against nohow. S'pose now I lose the life. What good's two thousand wheels to me? No sirree, you hear me talkin', if anybody wants to hunt road-agents, let 'em. I wouldn't think o' spoilin' their fun. I got me a good job at the Flyin'-M, an' I aim to keep it, y'betcha."

"What are you doing in town then?"

"Oh, I ain't exactly started in yet," the answer came pat. "Yuh see, I figure to spend all my money first. Maybe by the first o' next week I'll go to huntin' Scotty's strays."

"Scotty Mackenzie must be an easy-going employer to let you begin work with a vacation."

"Men are scarce." This was true. "I told him I wouldn't ride for him less'n I could have these few days off. Shucks, I don't draw wages till I start, so what's the differ to Scotty? Scotty he said he wished I was twins."

"Twins?"

"Shore, so's he could hire the other. He wants another man. They's a whole heap o' country to cover—more'n one stray man can swing. I tell yuh what, ma'am, yuh *ride* when the Flyin'-M hires yuh."

Was the little pulse beating less strongly now? He thought it was. Mrs. Wallace turned her eyes away and inspected the pink tips of her pretty fingers.

"Do you know," she remarked suddenly, "I like you."

"That's—that's fine," said he lamely, for he was somewhat taken aback.

"Yes," she continued, "you tell funny stories, and you aren't fresh. I—I like it. There's not much for a woman to do in this town. Of course, I'm busy here in the mornings, and the Broken Dollar fills in the evenings, but the afternoons are awfully long when there's no one to play with. I'm pretty lonely sometimes."

"That's shore a fright, ma'am." He did not know what else to say.

"Will you come to see me sometimes?" She gave him another of her straight looks.

"I'd admire to," he declared, and meant it, too.

And in a little while he said good-by and walked away up Main Street.

"Is she, or ain't she?" he asked himself. "——, I shore dunno. One thing, she's

a shore 'nough lady, even if she did show me that new way o' lightin' a cigaret. An' she likes me 'cause I don't get fresh, huh? I'd like to see myself. Bet she'd smack my face good if I did."

He turned in at Ragsdale's. The storekeeper was alone in the place and greeted him with a portentous wink.

"I ain't got no sofys nor goose-hair pillers nor stuffed-up chairs to offer yuh," Soapy observed, "but yuh can sit on the counter if yo're a good boy."

Johnny stared coolly at the storekeeper.

"Yuh seem to know a lot," he drawled.

Ragsdale put his head on one side and looked Johnny up and down. Then he scratched his ear.

"Nobody ever called you good-lookin', did they, Johnny?" asked Soapy anxiously.

"What'n ——," Johnny began indignantly.

"Well, I was wonderin'," explained his friend. "Yuh know, Johnny, my eyes are good. I can always see where I'm lookin', an' I never seen nothin' beautiful about yuh, 'ceptin' the way yuh handle a rifle. But she ain't seen yuh handle a rifle."

He paused in evident perplexity and scratched the other ear.

"It's that butter yuh don't sell," remarked Johnny. "She's gone to yore head. I don't wonder neither. The smell's thick enough to cut. Why dontcha open another window?"

"It ain't the butter," denied Soapy. "It's yore looks, an' you ain't got none, so that ain't possible. She's magic, that's what she is, magic. No offense meant, an' I know it ain't none o' my business, but I'm a married man an' maybe I can use the information. Howdja do it? Be a good feller an' tell."

"How'd I do what?"

"Howdja get to go see Mis' Wallace?"

"What's unusual in that?"

"Nothin', only yore the first gent ever went to her home to see her. An' walkin' up with her, too. That's why I say it's magic."

"Don't nobody ever go see her?"

"Plenty'd like to, but she won't have 'em. Not that she's standoffish. No sirree, it's 'Good mornin' ' with her an' 'H'are yuh, ma'am?' an' she smiles an' bows pleasant as yuh please an' twice as pretty. An' that's all. She'll take yore money or pay bets at the wheel with a word for all the boys. But it's always 'Not tonight, I'm sorry,' or 'Some other time,' when a gent only wants to walk home with her. An' she does it all without hurtin' a feller's feelin's. So this here is yore lucky day, Johnny. I'll bet if you was to go down to the Broken Dollar yuh'd break the bank."

The only man she had ever allowed to call. And she had asked him to call again. What was her purpose? There was one. She was not the woman to break her custom for a mere whim. Johnny wore his best poker face, but his eye was sardonic.

"For a storekeeper, Soapy, yo're one wise Abraham," said Johnny Ramsay, and changed the subject with a request for rifle cartridges, caliber 40-65.

But Soapy Ragsdale did not stock the odd calibers. Johnny departed for the Golden Rule. Again he was out of luck—40-65's were apparently a dead card in Paradise Bend. Johny reflected that there were other towns and other stores and took heart of hope.

That evening Johnny went to see Dorothy Burr. Her greeting was casual—elaborately so. There was a five-pound box of candy on the table.

"Have some," invited Dorothy.

Johnny thought he wouldn't eat any candy, thank you just the same. A tooth had been troubling him. He feared to excite the little brute. Dorothy smiled oddly.

"You weren't here when I got back," she remarked, the smile becoming a trifle fixed.

"Why no, I wasn't," confessed Johnny. "I was some'ers else."

"Isn't Lotta a dear?" The tone was ingenuous, but the smile was now quite fixed.

"Mis' Wallace? Shore, she's all that. Just as folksy as yuh please. Nothin' stuck-up about her."

"I heard she took you home with her."

"I guess she thought I was lonesome."

"All the same, it was rather a conspicuous thing to do, I think. She never has any one to call."

"So I heard." Dryly.

Dorothy stared at Johnny open-mouthed.

"Well," she burst out, "of all the smug, conceited men you're the smuggest and conceitedest!"

Then she laughed. But the laughter did not ring true.

CHAPTER XI

VERY STRAY MEN

"HE SHORE wanted me stretched—bad," conceded Johnny.

"W'at you t'ink—dees Slay she was one of dem bushw'ackair?" inquired Laguerre, his hard black eyes glittering.

"He wasn't one of 'em," Johnny said decidedly.

"How you know?"

The half-breed was now wholly the Indian. One saw back of those hard eyes the long, long line of relentless hunters of man.

"In the first place the hosses they rode was two chestnuts and a blacktail dun. His hoss was a big black. He's got several—two grays an' a red-'n'-white pinto, too."

"Huh," grunted Laguerre. "I weel look at de face o' dees man. I have de feelin'—but I weel firs' look at hees face, me. How far now to de plass w'ere dey keel Ol' Man Fane un Beel Homan?"

"About two mile."

"Lemme see dat watch, Johnnee."

Johnny handed his friend the shattered watch that had once been Homan's.

"Dees ees deir firs' meestak," observed Laguerre. "Bimeby dey mak anudder un anudder, un den we catch dem, by gar. De meestak, de meestak, alway de meestak. I have been de scout, I have leeve wit' Enjun, un I know, me."

So, holding converse on the ways of malefactors, red and white, they came to the scene of the murders and their attendant robbery. Three parts eaten by wolves, an offense to eye and nostril, Fane's dead horse lay by the side of the road. Breathing through their mouths, the two men forced their mounts up the side of the spur to the pocket among the pines where the road-agents had tied their horses.

The sign was more than seventy-two hours old, and it had been partly obliterated by the feet of Scotty and the investigating committee, yet Laguerre looked quite pleased.

"Dey tie two pony to dat pine," said he. "She ees de same pine un dem cayuse nevair move. One of dem stand on t'ree leg un point de off toe. See how deep ees de mark o' dat toe. She was stand dere long tam un was not move, dat cayuse. Dere was not de skeetair to mak dem move mabbeso. Dey was de pony wit' de good nature lak de lamb. Dey was tie wit' de rein. Dey was not even gnaw de bark.

"But look dere. Look w'ere de odder hoss was tie. She was move 'roun' de tree—geet all tangle' up. She was switch de tail—see dem hair on de quakin' asp. Un dem hair ees black. She was de dun hoss. She bite de bark. She pull back on de rope. How I know dat? Well, den, I have de eye, me, un I see w'ere leetle t'read o' de rope ees steeck een de bark. Dey ees steeck een hard, un dat ees how I know de hoss pull back.

"Dat dun was kick, too. See de mark o' hees shoe on dat pine. Here w'ere hees fore feet stan'. Long way 'tween dem two mark. She was de longleg hoss, dat dun cayuse. Shore I know you could not see all dat w'en dey was cross de creek. Dey was ride fas' un de watair was fly 'roun'. But I know, *bien sure.* Un all t'ree pony was shod. Gimme de match, my frien'. No hurry goin' to de Ben' now. I wan' for geet dere aftair de sun have set."

"We've got somethin' to go on," remarked Johnny, when both cigarets were burning well.

"We have got one 'ole lot for go on," softly corrected Laguerre. "We know dat one dese men use de 40-65 Winchestair, two pony ees de good-nature' ches'nut un one ees de long-leg blacktail dun w'at enjoy for bite de tree un keeck un pull back un have for be tie wit' de rope. Dat blacktail dun, I tell you, my frien', she ees anudder meestak. Dere can not be many pony lak dees hoss. No, dere can not. You will see."

Laguerre inhaled with complacency. He stretched his arms lazily and blew smoke through his nostrils and smiled a slow smile and licked his lips cat-fashion.

Johnny had given his friend a circumstantial account of events at the Bend. Which account, it must be said, lacked completeness in that Johnny neglected to mention Mrs. Lotta Wallace, her actions, and his call upon her. Somehow he did not feel it was necessary. Why drag her in?

At dusk Johnny and Laguerre separated, the latter to ride the trail in to the Bend, the former to cross the Yellow Medicine, and, ever keeping that stream on his left hand, skirt the sprawling length of Crow Mountain, strike the Flying-M trail at

Wagon Slue, and arrive in town from the north.

Between eleven and twelve Johnny dismounted at the hitching-rail of the Three Card. He was to meet Laguerre at the Three Card. But the half-breed was not in the saloon, nor was he at the Jacks Up, nor at Soapy Ragsdale's. Buster was in charge of the store, but he didn't know where pop was. Guessed he must be 'round some'ers. Johnny guessed so too and, on his way to the Broken Dollar, looked in at the Golden Rule. Cal Mason was there buying tobacco, and Dan Smith, the marshal, was picking out a shirt, a beautiful thing of savage orange, thickly besprinkled with a chaste design of purple horseshoes.

Cal Mason greeted Johnny with a grave "H'are yuh?" behind which lurked the smile of friendship, but Dan Smith did not go beyond a stiff nod. Johnny, his sardonic eye fixed on the marshal's ultrabilious choice, leaned against the counter.

"Now, that's what I call a shirt," he observed cheerfully.

"I dunno as yuh got any license to call it anythin'," said the liverish Dan Smith.

"I was just admirin' it, Marshal," insisted Johnny. "No offense, but yuh'll shore be right up in style. Back East they sell shirts like this here so fast that the factories all have to work overtime. Yessir, shore do. An' why, 'cause all the laundrymen buy 'em. No soap-wrastlin' Chink o' the lot thinks he can go out walkin' Sunday afternoons less'n he's inside one o' these shirts. Funny, ain't it?"

Johnny's eyes were no longer sardonic. They were calm and sweetly innocent as they gazed into the face of the marshal. The latter, very angry, could have slain him willingly. But there are times when to take offense means to make oneself ridiculous. Dan Smith did not wish to appear ridiculous. He compromised by according Johnny no further attention and taking the shirt.

Johnny, allowing him thirty seconds' handicap, followed. He was in time to see the marshal pause a hundred feet away, swing his arm, and hurl something in between two houses. After which the marshal went into the Jacks Up Saloon.

Johnny hurried to where the marshal had stood and dived into the space between the two houses. Groping purposefully in the darkness, his fingers encountered a paper-wrapped parcel. He swept it up and returned to the street. In the light from an open window he tore off a corner of the wrapping. A vivid purple horseshoe backed by savage orange stared him out of countenance.

The marshal, drinking with friends at the Jacks Up bar, felt a touch on his shoulder. He turned to behold the too-familiar features of Johnny Ramsay. The puncher laid a parcel on the bar, a parcel from whose torn wrapper protruded the tail of Dan Smith's recent purchase.

"Yore shirt," Johnny announced distinctly. "Yuh dropped it—in the street."

The pause between the two halves of the explanatory sentence was obvious. The marshal knew that he was being maliciously badgered, and he knew that Johnny knew that he knew. But again this was one of those times. Besides, Cal Mason, expectantly solemn, was watching from the doorway. The marshal mumbled his thanks, tucked in the dangling shirt-tail, and stuck the package under his arm. Johnny went out into the street. There the delighted Cal Mason fell into step at his side.

"Yore style suits me," averred Cal. "Let's licker."

So they crossed the street to the Three Card and said "How" twice. After which ceremony Johnny drifted down to the Broken Dollar and Cal went home to tell his wife how Scotty Mackenzie's stray man had run a blazer on Dan Smith.

At the Broken Dollar Johnny found Laguerre playing poker with the express-agent, hard-faced Tom Keen, and one of Slay's dealers. Johnny smiled inwardly. For the half-breed was skilful at cards, and his skill was costing the others much money. All the blue chips on the table were in front of Laguerre, and a blue chip in the Broken Dollar was standard at ten dollars.

Johnny, on his way to the bar, passed the roulette table. Mrs. Wallace was behind the wheel, and business was very brisk. Leaning against the wall at her back stood her brother. His hands were in his trousers pockets and a long black cigar was clamped between his jaws. He glanced at Johnny with twinkling, merry eyes and nodded. Mrs. Wallace did not see the puncher. She was busy raking in several bets.

While Johnny was still eyeing his first drink, in marched, to his intense disgust,

Racey Dawson. Racey was not due for two days, and here he was on the heels of Telescope. Johnny yearned to tell Racey what he thought of him.

AS RACEY came through the doorway he slapped his side with a full sweep of both arms. Dust flew from him in a gray cloud. His face was ashen with it. Grinning widely, he crossed the floor straight to where Johnny stood at the bar, and Johnny saw that there was dust inside his ears and down his neck.

"Thought you'd get away from me, huh?" cried Racey, teetering on his heels in front of Johnny. "Tried to give me the slip, huh? Just 'cause I had a li'l business over on the Two Deer an' was maybe now a day late, yuh run off an' left me."

Racey in his teetering apparently lost his balance and fell forward against the dismayed Johnny, who foresaw the crumbling of his plans under Racey's blundering. But Racey's hand, flung out to save himself, gripped Johnny's arm, and Johnny felt that member squeezed three times before Racey regained his equilibrium.

"Aw, yuh'd oughta come sooner," Johnny said instantly. "Djuh think I got nothin' to do but wait for yuh while yo're hellin' 'round all over the country?"

Their voices were not pitched low, but Laguerre, facing them at his table across the room, gave no sign that he heard.

"Well, yuh might 'a' waited," grumbled Racey. "Le's irrigate."

While they stood in silence, the bottle between them, a man slouched in from the street and halted inside the doorway. He was a stocky citizen with a sandy mustache and an aggressive chin. He pushed back his hat and one perceived that his head was curiously pinched-in at the temples. This characteristic, combined as it was with total absence of eyebrows, and a wall-eye, did not make for attractiveness. The stocky man surveyed the roomful with a cold and fishy stare. His oblique gaze passed over Johnny and Racey and apparently fixed itself on a corner of the bar. Still looking at the corner of the bar, Wall-eye swaggered bow-leggedly up to Racey Dawson and suggested drinks. He likewise smiled amiably, revealing the lack of two upper front teeth.

"This here's my friend, Johnny Ramsay," said Racey, flicking a tactful thumb at Johnny. "What might I call you?"

"Now I shore did forget to tell yuh my name, didn't I?" smiled the stranger, his crooked eye missing Racey by four feet. "Which she's 'Bale' Harper. Barkeep, got a lame arm? I'm waitin' for a glass."

The bartender hastily slid a bottle and a glass across the bar. As the newcomer tilted the bottle Johnny noticed that the third finger of his right hand was cut off at the second joint. Bale Harper downed his liquor at a gulp, and instantly poured out another glassful. Two or three fingers were not for Harper. He filled his glass a-brim and slopping over.

"Nothin' like good measure," said he with a leer, and added with emphasis, "that's somethin' I always aim to get."

Johnny made no comment. He did not like this Bale Harper.

"Got a brother 'round here some'ers," remarked Mr. Harper with his gap-toothed grin. "Been lookin' for him ever since I drifted in. You ain't seen him, have yuh, Mister Ramsay—feller about my size he is, sandy hair an' face likewise, called Spill?"

"Ain't seen him today," answered the puncher, shaking an indifferent head. "Yes'-day he was 'round. Him an' Tom Keen was together. There's Tom over there. Maybe he'll know."

But Johnny's hint did not bear fruit. Bale Harper frowned in the general direction of Tom Keen and said he guessed he'd wait and see Spill later.

"—— good whisky," he declared, and had another.

"I'm tired," announced Racey. "Guess now I'll give an imitation of a young feller rollin' in. How about the hotel, Johnny—got a bed?"

"Shore. C'mon."

They departed, despite strong urging to the contrary by Bale Harper. But they did not go to the hotel. For privacy in conversation was impossible in that hostelry. The partitions were too thin and there were many cracks. Hence it was that Johnny and his friend, walking without haste, slid silently between Soapy Ragsdale's house and his corral and felt their cautious way in among Soapy Ragsdale's neatly corded stacks of Winter firewood.

"What's up?" demanded Johnny, when they were squatting on their heels between two stacks.

"——," was Racey's answer. "Lute Holloway's downed and Slim Berdan's shot through both legs an' his shoulder. "

"Is that why yuh——"

"You wait. Lemme tell it my own way, will yuh?"

"Shore, but yore way is such a —— funny way, Racey. Y' always travel ten mile to go two."

"Aw, shut up, I'm travelin' straight now. An' speakin' o' travelin'! Say, if you'd done the ridin' I been doin' these last three days you'd cash, yuh hear me talkin'. My hoss is down to a whisper an' I don't feel like much more'n a short stutter myself. Say——"

"There yuh go, a-whirlin' that wide loop! I'm shore sorry to hear yo're tired. I'd cry for yuh if I could. But I don't see why yuh didn't wait till it was time to start like we planned. The stage'd brought the news about Holloway an' Slim."

"Gimme a chance, gimme a chance! My Gawd, yuh want the whole thing all at once. You lemme alone—who's talkin' loud? I ain't. Yo're doin' the bellerin'. Well, Telescope he sifted out o' town four days ago in the mornin'. I stayed. That night Bill Lainey an' me are in the Blue Pigeon about one o'clock listenin' to Mike Flynn gas about them South Sea Islands o' his, when *Bangety-Bang!* goes a rifle down street a ways. *Bangety-Bang!* goes another, then a couple more mixes in, an' they's a whole hatful o' noise. The South Sea Islands stopped immediate, an' we sits down on the floor where the counter's thickest. An' a good thing we did. A 40-65 comes in a window, grooves the counter over my head, busts a can o' peaches on the opposite shelf an' sticks in the wall. An'——"

"A 40-65, yuh say?"

"Shore, a 40-65. Lemme tell it, lemme tell it—huh? O' course I know. Mike he dug the lead out o' the wood later an' he told me. Well, that one bullet was all that come our way. They's only a few shots, not more'n thirty at the outside, then *tuckety-tuck, tuckety-tuck* up the street come four jiggers a-ridin' an' a-quirtin' an' a-spurrin' like they hadn't a minute to live. They wasn't out o' town before they's a pile o' hollerin' down in front o' Slim Berdan's house. The three of us goes down, an' they's the two Holland boys carryin' Slim Berdan, bleedin' like a stuck steer, into his house. Across the sidewalk Lute Holloway's lyin' on his face. They's five holes in Lute an' one o' them holes is in his heart."

"As good a deputy as they ever was in Fort Creek County, Lute was," put in Johnny.

"Shore. Jake Rule was worse'n wild. Well, what with Lute downed an' Slim shot up, they's all kinds o' friskin' 'round, but we got started in maybe fifteen minutes—Jake Rule, Kyle, his other deputy; yores truly, 'Two Spot' Riley, 'Piney' Jackson, maybe they's twenty-five of us—an' we hit the breeze. We knowed they'd headed north on the Bend trail an' that's all we did know."

"Didn't nobody see 'em close?"

"Slim did, but she was too dark to see much. They was all on their hosses, anyhow."

"What did they try to do—rob the express office?"

"They did not. They come in to get Slim, an' Holloway, 'cause he lived with Slim, got into the muss."

"Howdja know?"

"Why, they all four come a-gallopin' up to Slim's house, an' one of 'em rides up on the sidewalk an' hammers on Slim's door, an' yells for Slim to come out quick, he's wanted. Slim he says he thought right away they was a fraycas in town, so him an' Holloway jumps out o' bed an' runs for the door. Lute reaches the door first an' runs out. They got him instanter before he can even pull. Slim had time to pull all right an' flip the hammer twice before they shot the gun out of his hand and throwed three bullets into him other places."

"Then what?"

"We rode after them killers like I said, an' it's night an' all an' we over-rode their tracks. So we had to work back an' when it come daylight we found where they'd left the trail just south o' Bear Mountain an' headed northwest. That settled it for Jake Rule. Northwest meant them killers couldn't be bound nowhere else but the Emigrant Hills on the Dogsoldier. So we spraddled right along, losin' the trail an' findin' her again, an' bimbey we lost her good an' proper like I knowed we would in a creek.

"Shore, they rode the water like ducks, an' we never did pick up the trail again.

But that didn't bother Jake Rule. 'The Emigrant Hills, boys,' says Jake. 'We'll catch 'em there.' We stopped at the Anvil ranch for fresh horses—but no news. Nobody stopped there in two weeks, an' they hadn't missed a single cayuse."

"The B-bar-B's west o' the Anvil an' Hall's is east," suggested Johnny.

"Shore, but we didn't have time to go there. We went on an' we hit the Emigrants an' never seen a measly hoofmark anywhere. We met Burns, the Wagon Wheel stray man, an' he hadn't seen nobody. I knowed they was behind us some'ers—they had to be. But Jake's stubborn like he always is, an' he combs the Emigrants industrious. Where we was in the Emigrants wasn't more'n ninety or a hundred miles to the Bend, so I decided to come right along on an' let Jake an' the others scatter 'round all they wanted."

But what did yuh come bawlin' out in the Broken Dollar for about me not waitin' for yuh, huh?"

"ON ACCOUNT o' that Bale Harper feller. This mornin' at Rocket —I spent the last half o' the night at Sinclair's, an' he's there too—he saddles up when I do an' allows if I'm goin' north he'll trail along. Says he gets lonesome, an' likes to talk. Now he ain't exactly curious, this Bale ain't, but he shore does like to talk an' is one easy sport to make friends with. He don't make it hard for yuh to up-end yore whole life's history into his ears if yuh want to. No sir, yuh could do it without a struggle. An' I can't get rid o' him.

"We stopped at a ranch along about noon, an' he wants to rest his hoss, so I says I'll be pushin' along. He says maybe his hoss ain't so tired after all an' he strings his chips with mine all the way to the Bend. So I figured when he come into the saloon after me the only thing I could do was to bluff him by partly tellin' the truth. I dunno nothin' about that jigger outside o' what I'm tellin' yuh, but I'm bettin' he's a bad actor. He's got a bad eye more ways 'n one."

"An' yuh say he didn't ask any questions?"

"None to take offense at."

"No, he wouldn't, but did he say anythin' a-tall about any places?"

"Places?"

"Shore, places—towns, hills, creeks, the like o' that."

Racey thought hard.

"Seems to me now he did say somethin' about the Dogville trail."

Now Dogville is an infinitesimal hamlet dotting the bluff at the junction of the Dogsoldier and the Lazy rivers. Yet an occasional freighter goes to Dogville, and there is a trail connecting the village with the Bend trail north of Cutter. This trail runs within a mile of the Anvil ranch-house.

"What did he say about the Dogville trail?" questioned Johnny.

"Said, 'Wasn't she a —— ova trail?' 'or somethin'."

"What did you say?"

"I says I didn't know—never followed the trail in my life."

"Yuh didn't!" Painful amazement rode Johnny's tone.

"Shore, why not?"

"Tell yuh later. Was the Dogville trail all he asked about?"

"Cutter—yeah, Cutter. Had Tommy Mull changed the whisky at his hotel yet, an' I says no, same old whisky she always was. Playin' foxy myself, see—lettin' him think I come through Cutter."

"Oh, yo're a ringtail whizzer, Racey! Honest, if yuh had any more sense you'd be half-witted!"

"What'd I do I'd like to know. Didn't I hafta say somethin' to yuh in the saloon? Didn't I hafta, huh? I'm askin' yuh, didn' I?"

"You was all right in the saloon. It was before yuh got there yuh was all wrong."

"I'd admire to know why," grumbled the offended Racey.

"This is why: yuh was ridin' an Anvil hoss, wasn't yuh? An' yuh said yuh never rode the Dogville trail in yore life. Harper met yuh on the Bend trail. All right, yuh never seen the Dogville trail, so he tries yuh again with Tommy Mull's whisky at Cutter. You told him she was the same old whisky, didn' yuh?"

"Shore."

"Right there he got yuh. Ten days ago Tommy Mull got religion an' run every drop o' whisky he owned out on the grass. Since this yuh couldn't get a drink in Tommy's place if yuh was dyin'. An' you played foxy by blattin' out — 'She's the same ol' whisky'!"

Racey was dumb for a space.

"I shore put my foot in it, I guess," he mourned, when Johnny had rolled a scornful cigaret.

"That Anvil hoss showed yuh'd been west o' the Bend trail some'ers," said Johnny, sticking the cigaret in his mouth for a dry smoke, "an' 'cause yuh didn't know nothin' o' the Dogville trail nor Tommy's gettin' religion showed yuh'd been romancin' round the country north an' west o' Cutter. He could see by the condition o' the hoss yuh'd been shovin' along hard an' fast. An' a fellah in this country don't shove his hoss less'n he's a hoss-thief or in a posse."

"Maybe he took me for a hoss-thief," suggested Racey hopefully.

"O' course if you was yuh'd ride along with him the way yuh did an' yuh'd bring the hoss here to the Bend, where the brand's known, wouldn't yuh?"

"Well——"

"Racey, I'll bet he knows yuh was part of a posse."

"Can't help it. How'n —— could I guess all this?"

"If we're a-goin' to corral these road-agents yuh'l hafta guess a lot more'n this. Djever stop to think Harper may be one o' the Farewell killers?"

"He ain't," said Racey, eager to be of some use. "He was at Rocket nearly a week. I heard Dave Sinclair say so."

"He was, was he? Guess now I'll just go down an' have a li'l talk with Dave."

"Do yuh think that Bale Harper feller is in with the road-agents?" asked Racey lugubriously hugging his knees.

"I dunno. He's somethin' off, whatever his game is, or he'd never 'a' made them breaks about the Dogville trail an' Tommy's whisky. Look here, Racey, didn't nobody see nothin' o' the jiggers that downed Lute Holloway?"

"It was dark, I tell yuh. All Bill Lainey an' Mike Flynn an' me could see was so many black shadders a-flyin' past."

"Think now. Scratch yore head if yuh gotta, but think. You talked to Slim after he was shot, didn't yuh?"

"Shore, but——"

"An' yuh heard him talk, didn't yuh, Now, what——"

"Everybody was runnin' 'round, I tell yuh, Johnny. How can I remember?"

"If yuh'll shut up about a minute an' gimme a chance I'll show yuh how yuh can remember maybe. You an' as many as could was all in the room with Slim. There was Slim a-layin' on the bed with Doc Kramer swabbin' at his nicks an' puttin' on bandages. They's the lamp lit, an' somebody's a-holdin' it so's doc can see to work, an' Bill Lainey's breathin' hard an' shufflin' his feet, an' Slim's a-talkin' kind o' gaspy, an' yuh gotta scrouge forrard so's yuh can hear what he's sayin'. Now what did he say besides that about they bein' four of 'em an' Lute's runnin' out first? Nemmine how I know it. I know. Now, what did Slim say?"

Thus adjured, Racey strove to live again his part in the scene reconstructed by Johnny Ramsay. There was Slim lying on the blood-stained blankets of the bed. Doc Kramer had cut his shirt and trousers away. There were tourniquets on both legs. Slim was talking—wheezing, rather. What was he saying—something about a horse, wasn't it? Yes, that was it. A light-colored horse. And one of the riders wore no hat. Slim saw him against the stars. Was there anything else? Racey Dawson scratched his head, closed tight his eyes, but could not remember another word of what Slim had said. He opened his eyes and hitched nearer his friend.

"I thought maybe yuh could tell me somethin' if yuh tried," observed Johnny, when Racey had unbosomed himself. "A light-colored cayuse, huh? Dun, maybe?"

"Can't say. Slim didn't."

"An' the gent with no hat—was he ridin' this light hoss?"

"He was ridin' one o' the others. I remember Slim sayin' that. He seen him plain against the stars after he'd fell down —Slim fell down."

"No hat. Now, why wouldn't he wear a hat, I wonder?" pondered Johnny.

"Maybe he lost it," contributed Racey.

"Maybe he had it tied to his saddle-strings. Maybe she was a odd hat or somethin' an' he was afraid somebody'd recognize it. Maybe she was a wide white hat with a high crown, higher than most. Djever see a hat like that, Racey?"

"The red-head!" Racey's whisper was sharp. "He had a hat like that!"

"He shore had, an' comin' back after Slim would be what he'd do if he got the chance."

"Slim did run him out o' town kind o' abrupt."

"That light-colored hoss—yuh can't tell. She might 'a' been a dun."

"S'pose she was. What of it?"

"A lot maybe. Wait till tomorrow an' we'll go over the whole thing with Telescope—Oh, that was easy. I guessed it. O' course Slim was a-layin' on the bed. Where else would he lay? An' somebody'd hafta hold the lamp so's doc could work, an' Bill Lainey always breathes hard an' shuffles his feet when he's interested, an' Slim couldn't help talkin' gaspy if he had three holes in him. So there y'are. Le's go to bed."

CHAPTER XII

LAGUERRE TALKS

"WHAT was Mat Neville comin' north for?" demanded Johnny.

"I know, but——"

"Aw, yuh make me sick, Racey. It stands to reason, don't it, Telescope?"

"S'pose now dey fin' de hat een Farewell, un she ees not a w'ite hat?" evaded the half-breed.

"I'm gamblin' they won't find it. Anyhow I'm writin' to Jake Rule to find out for sure. But you can bet she's them three hold-ups an' the red-head, an' he tied his hat on his saddle so's she wouldn't give him away. It's just what he would do."

"He would if he did." Thus cryptically Mr. Dawson.

"An' three men with him. Where'd he get three men together to try an' down Slim an' Holloway outside o' the road-agent crowd?"

"Holloway had enemies. So'd Slim."

"Shore, but scatterin'. A gent here, another there, an' all in different parts o' the county. They might lay for Lute an' Slim separate, but they'd never organize four in a bunch. If I could only be sure that light-colored hoss was a black-tail dun. Any way, one of 'em was usin' a 40-65. That's somethin'."

"One t'ing," observed Laguerre: "eef de red-head she belong to de hold-up outfit, w'y don' she stop de stage wit' de res'? De men w'at have do dat are seex-foot mabbeso, but dees man wit' de red hair she ees seex-foot-four, un no one was ever see man tall as dat stop de stage or rob de minair."

"I know that," agreed Johnny. "I've asked a heap o' folks an' none of 'em have ever seen a gent like this red-head, but djever stop to think that the folks he holds up might be too dead to talk about it afterward?"

"Dat ees true," nodded Laguerre.

"But somebody's got to see him if he is one of 'em," said Racey.

"Somebody will—if he is. How about that stage-station job, Racey, or would yuh rather toss up for the stray man end?"

"Not me. I'll get a job in town myself. She's a right nice li'l place—good scenery, good folks."

"Yeah." Suspiciously.

"They's a right handsome-lookin' lady in the Bend, an' I aim to meet her. Yessir, I'm satisfied to give my hoss a rest."

"Who's the lady?" Acute interest mixed with the suspicion.

"The one behind the wheel at the Broken Dollar. Say——"

"He's off!" cried the greatly relieved Johnny. "When Racey Dawson starts talkin' about a girl, he's good for all day. Le's go away an' leave him, Telescope."

The three had rendezvoused in a thickly wooded gulch on the eastern slope of Old Baldy. In accordance with their plan Johnny and Laguerre rode from there straight to the Flying M and Racey Dawson returned to the Bend. Racey had not informed his two friends of his intention to loaf about town a few days before starting to work. There was no hurry. And roulette is a fascinating game. Besides, there was Bale Harper to be investigated. He couldn't do that very well if he was working. Of course not. He had more than a hundred dollars in his poke, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. Racey crooked a leg 'round his saddle-horn and whistled the "Rakes of Mallow" with joy and abandon. An easy conscience is a wonderful thing.

Johnny and Laguerre were openly and loudly hired by Scotty Mackenzie ten minutes after their arrival at the Flying-M. The foreman, Doubleday of the sharp nose and sharper eye, took them at their face value and sent them down to the bunk-house. Doubleday did not fully comprehend the necessity of two stray men, but he knew Scotty to be a creature of whims. No one ever even dreamed of questioning Scotty's whims. So when the old ranchman said that he himself would give the new men their orders, Doubleday merely

shifted his quid and dismissed the subject from his mind.

The next morning Johnny and Laguerre rode away southward. That men might know of the place and manner of their employment the two rode Flying-M horses and carried open letters signed by Scotty.

"Guess maybe we'd better stop in the Bend, Telescope," said Johnny when the town was less than a mile away. "I—we gotta see what Racey's doin'."

"Shore, un I wan' for see w'at dat Meestair Slay she was do."

"Got any idea what for a gent he is yet? I didn't see yuh look him over very close."

"I was look all right. But I do not let you see me look, un I do not let heem see me look. I am not de —— fool, me. She ees not easy for tell what she ees lak. I know dees, she ees de wan w'at do de beeg t'ing. She would not be satisfy wit' less."

"Whatcha mean?"

"I mean eef she ees de rustlair she would not rustle forty cow, she would rustle 'ole —— herd. Eef she steal de money, she would not steal feefty-seexty dollar, she would tak ten t'ousan'. Now you see."

"I see."

"Un she ees clevair, dees man. By gar, she have de brain. Dose t'ing I see."

The half-breed's expressive shrug was a direct legacy from his French father.

"But," he continued harshly, "w'at I can not see, I can guess."

"That's easy. So can I guess."

"We do not guess de same, mabbeso. Leesten. Las' night I was talk wit' Scotty un she tell me w'at she know about dees Slay un hees seestair, how dey was come from Cheecawgo, un de seestair she ride de pony lak —— un was not run 'roun' wit' de men un Slay she mak money een de Broken Dollar. All right, dat ees fine, hones' beesness, but she ees small beesness. She ees too small for man lak Slay. Un de seestair—Johnny, have you ever see de beeg ceety?"

"I been east to Cheyenne once."

"Yeah, Cheyenne ees de ceety, but she ees not de beeg ceety. By gar, me, I have see Kebec un Montreal un Ottawa w'en I was boy, un dere een dat plass I was see *les grandes demoiselles*, not de dance-hall girl wit' de paint un de —— smile lak one spidair, but de great, great lady all dress up een de seelk un de feddair.

"*Bon Dieu*, I was so close to dem I could touch dem, me. But I deed not. I was 'fraid, un I step off de sidewalk. But I was watch, always I was watch, un I was een dat plass t'ree year, un I say dat w'en I go 'way I know de lady w'en I see her. Un dat ees w'at Mees Wallace ees. She ees all same one o' dem *grandes demoiselles* een Kebec un Montreal un Ottawa."

"You mean you seen her there?" Johnny was obviously skeptical.

"No, I was not see her. I mean she ees lak dem. She ees *une grande demoiselle*, un she have de brain behin' de eye, too. Well den, I say, me, w'y a man un a lady, bot' wit' de brain un de lady a *grande demoiselle*, w'y dey come here to dees plass, dees plass w'ere dere ees nuttin' but de heel un de cow un de pony?"

Johnny bethought him of Texas Pete, the two cigarets and the one match. Did *grandes demoiselles* act that way? He wondered. Laguerre misinterpreted his silence.

"Dere now, you see w'at I see," he exclaimed in triumph, "un you guess w'at I guess. Money was bring dem, un eet was not de money een de Broken Dollar."

"I been thinkin' some o' friend Slay that way, myself," admitted Johnny, "an' the more I think of it, the more I like the notion. But that ain't provin' it's so none. Yuh know it's plumb easy to believe a thing when yuh want to. When I said somethin' to Scotty about Slay an' the bandits he couldn't see it a-tall. Don't like Slay none, he says, but he's gotta give him his due an' say they ain't a thing against him. Slay's always in town when they's hold-ups, 'cept this last one, an' I know he wasn't in that."

"Deed I not say Meestair Slay she have de brain?" asked Laguerre softly.

"Sort o' sits back an' lets the other feller work, huh?"

"We weel see, mabbeso."

On their way through town they stopped at the Burr house.

"She ain't home," the voice of young Sammy Barnes shouted from the corral.

"Ain't Mis' Burr got back from Jack Creek yet?" A clever blend of surprise and dignity on the part of Mr. Ramsay.

"You didn't come to see Mis' Burr!" retorted the turtle in loud, unsympathetic tones. "You come to see Dor'thy! Whatcha bluffin' for, huh? Can't fool me! I seen yuh! Yo're stuck on Dor'thy, that's whatcha are!"

Had the state of being stuck on Dorothy

been a most flagitious offense Johnny could not have reddened more enthusiastically. Mrs. Mace, residing a few houses nearer Main Street, hurried outdoors to shake a dust-rag. Mrs. Carey and Tug Wilson's sister both had business on their doorsteps. Heads appeared at various open windows.

"Harry—Slay—give her—'nother—box o' —candy—yest'day—why—don'tchu—give —her—some?"

Which breathless combination statement and question was delivered in the childish squawk of Mrs. Carey's eight-year-old. Mrs. Carey disappeared within. Followed then the sound of smackings punctuated by anguished wails. An appreciative giggle ran about the street.

Johnny Ramsay, illogically hating women and small children with cordial intensity, wheeled his horse and rode off. But the giggle followed him to the corner of Main Street.

IT IS TRUE that all the world loves a lover. But it does not love two lovers. It laughs heartily and makes bets on the outcome. Johnny, recognizing with mental writhing the factuality of these things, failed to comprehend why he should be classed as one of the lovers. True, he had called on the lady, but not conspicuously. True again, he admired the lady, but likewise not conspicuously—at least this is what he told himself.

That he should be stirred to disgustful irritation by Dorothy's seemingly complacent acceptance of Slay's attentions was but natural. The gambler was much too equivocal a character to be comradely with a young girl. Johnny's concern was all for the young girl. Of course, she was precisely what he had told Scotty, merely a friend. Absolutely nothing more.

Johnny did not forget his declaration to Scotty to the effect that, as no one else seemed disposed to protect Dorothy from the man Slay, he himself would attend to the matter. He realized in bitterness of soul that he was not making good.

"Look dere!" Laguerre said surprisedly.

Johnny looked. Ahead of them the stage company's horses were being driven by a hostler to water. Racey, in overalls, mounted bareback, was talking to the hostler.

"When yuh get back," Racey was saying, "put on some axle-grease to keep the flies off that V-T hoss where he cut himself an' scout 'round after that neck-yoke. Tug says she's near the big corral some'ers."

The hostler departed in the dust of his tittuping charges, and Racey looked into the faces of his two friends and smiled—one-sidedly, his upper lip being bruised and puffed to twice its normal size. Racey's right eye was thoroughly blackened and an abrasion marked the left side of his jaw. There were scratches on his nose and his knuckles were skinned.

"What hit yuh?" asked Johnny.

" 'Skinny' Devinney, the station boss," replied Racey.

"Don't blame him. What was yuh tryin' to do?"

"I was just arguin' with him."

"Arguin'?"

"Shore. I asks him for a job all so pretty and polite, an' he says somethin' about not wantin' no feller in hair pants a-workin' for him. Then I just had to argue with him."

Johnny's eyes strayed toward the combined stage station and express office. Below one of the windows pieces of broken glass and splintered sash littered the ground.

"Looks like the window got busted," hazarded Johnny.

"He done it—on his way out," explained Racey. "He didn't want to go," he added.

Johnny's eyes rested on Racey's features.

"I expect," he said drily. "I notice he gave yuh a job."

"Yeah, he gimme his. Yuh see, after he'd went, there was the job left an orphan an' there was me, an' Tug Wilson he says it looked just like Providence. Me, I'm the station boss myself."

"Lucky for you Devinney didn't have a gun, "observed Johnny. "Yuh better keep yore eye skinned, Racey. She's just possible he may organize with one an' come back a-huntin' him his job."

"He—he had a gun," Racey said in some embarrassment. "I kind o' had to pry it away from him before he'd act decent."

Laguerre laughed delightedly.

"Didn't he try to throw down?" demanded Johnny.

"Oh, he tried," admitted Racey.

"Yuh bat's-eyed ol' son-of-a-gun," Johnny drawled in keenest admiration.

"See yuh later," grinned Racey. "Gotta take this accordeen to the blacksmith."

Johnny stared after Racey, and his brows drew together.

"More I think of it," he observed to

Laguerre, "the less I like this wrastlin' 'round with Skinny Devinney. Seems like she was kind o' unnecessary an' a heap likely to come high for Racey. I've heard Skinny was a hard customer."

"Le's go see heem," said Laguerre.

But the ex-station-boss was not to be found in the Bend. Skinny Devinney had saddled a horse and pulled his freight.

"An' I always thought Skinny was a fighter," their bartending informant remarked with disgust. "After gettin' his cork pulled thataway he can't never show up in this town again, that's a cinch. Shore, but throat's a leetle raw this mornin'. I'll take a cigar 'f yuh don't mind."

"Help yoreself. We'll take about twenty-five apiece. I like a good smoke, I do, an' I don't guess we'll run up on any cigars like these in the Yellow Medicine country."

"Ridin' there, huh?"

"Between the Medicine an' Dry Creek. Seven an' four-bits? Here y'are. Le's wander, Telescope."

"Good morning, Mister Ramsay."

It was a gay and Sunday morning voice that spoke, and Johnny, in the act of mounting, slid his foot from the stirrup and turned, dragging off his hat. Mrs. Wallace smiled up into his face with eyes and mouth.

"G'mornin', ma'am," said Johnny, and wished Telescope would go away.

But the half-breed had no intention of doing any such thing. He sat quite still in the saddle, rolling a cigaret, and unobtrusively observing the lady from under his hat brim. Johnny, greatly against his will, was forced to introduce him.

"You haven't forgotten about coming to see me?" she said to Johnny in a low tone.

"Now, ma'am, how could I?"

"Tonight?" The black eyes pleaded. I'm not working tonight. I take a vacation now and then. This evening will be then. Do come. I'll be all alone."

"I'd shore like to. But I ain't a-goin' to be in town. I'm workin' for Scotty now."

"It isn't far from the ranch if—if you really want to come." The long curving lashes were lowered and she was poking with her parasol at a crack in the sidewalk.

"It ain't a case o' want, ma'am," protested Johnny. "But by tonight I'll be in Rocket. Tomorrow me an' my friend'll be over east o' the Yellow Medicine somers. We'll work back to the Flyin'-M by way of Dry Creek, the Seven-Lazy-Seven, an' Cavalry Valley. Two weeks, ma'am, 'fore I'll see the Bend again."

"Oh, I am sorry," said she; "but you'll come to see me when you return?"

"Shore will."

Again the red lips parted in their fascinating smile. She inclined head and shoulders in a little bow that included Laguerre, swung her parasol and strolled away.

"You know Mees Dor'ty Burr, huh?" asked the half-breed, when they had passed from Main Street to the Farewell trail.

"Shore, I know her. Why?"

"She un Slay dey was ride by w'ile you was talk wit' de *grande demoiselle*."

"Yeah." Outwardly uninterested.

"Yeah, she look at you leetle, den she was look at Slay, un laugh un talk fas'."

"Huh." Still the outward lack of interest.

"Eet ees hard for drive two pony."

"What's drivin' two cayuses gotta do with me, I'd like to know?"

"I was jus' say so." Laguerre shrugged Gallic shoulders. "I have been de scout, I have leeve wit' Enjun. I see w'at I see."

"Say, Telescope, whatcha talkin' about?"

"I was jus' talk," evaded Laguerre, dropping his off eyelid. "You deed not say you was know dees Mees' Wallace w'en I was talk about her de firs' tam."

"Guess I must 'a' forgot. Don't make no difference, does it?"

"She ees smart," Laguerre sidestepped.

"Well?"

"You have tell her w'ere we go."

"Shore I did. I had to. We may be trailed. If we say before we start where we're a-goin' to, an' then go there, they won't be so suspicious. They'll never think we'd say right out where we was lookin' for evidence, would they now?"

"I unnerstan'. You have walk een de watair by tellin' de trut'. But deed I not say dat lady she ees smart? She weel t'ink dat ees jus' w'at you would do, mabbeso."

"She ain't as smart as that," Johnny denied vigorously.

"She ees —— sight smarter dan dat. I tell you dat lady ees hard for fool."

"Yo're always lookin' on the black side, y' ol' wet blanket."

"Aw right, you weel see," said Laguerre, nodding sagely. "Gimme de match."

TO BE CONTINUED

Captain Findlay's Last Voyage

by T Nichols

THIS is a story of the sea, the great inexplicable sea, a tale of the strangeness of life, of the trickiness of chance, of heat and the East and the vagaries of a man's mind; but primarily of the sea, for it could have happened nowhere but at sea. It required the setting of the sea, the loneliness of the sea, the brooding power of vast spaces that inevitably and inexorably takes possession of the human soul, kneads it, molds it, goads it to a predestined goal.

The sea is the fate, the master, the Nemesis of those that follow it; the sea is the great Kismet. And it is more. It is the unalterable past and a sham future; in its stillness, its loneliness, its vastness, memories are mirrored back; and in its depths, in its reposeful beauty, are dreams not of what will be, shall be, but of what ought to be, should be.

This story is not my story; I was merely an onlooker, a supernumerary, you may say; I had no vital part in this drama, this fifth act of a man's destiny. This is the story of the sea and of Captain Horace Findlay and his ship, the *Aladdin*.

During my life at sea I have sailed under many commanders, and of them all Captain Findlay was the strangest, his picture stands out vividest, sharpest-drawn against the background of the past. That last impression of him, alone on the bridge in the night, is eternal. But even at first he had an unreal mystifying fascination.

He seemed to be at once an appeal and a command. He was heavy-set and taciturn, a little up in years—about sixty—rather shortish, bald, keen-featured, sallow-complexioned. He wore a full beard, black interwoven with gray, black that had lost its color in places, a beard long and square that gave him a religious, almost patriarchal appearance. But his eyes were most impressive—no, impressive is not the word—they were disconcerting, bewildering as a strange child's.

Their color was black, a color not uncommon or remarkable; but the strangeness, I might almost say the weirdness, was in their expression. Imagine a perpetual painful frown, thick eyebrows, long, dark eyelashes, and a look that seemed troubled and appealing as if questioning Fate. And with this a spasmodic restlessness. At times the eyes hardened. If they were turned at one, they seemed bright and probing, abnormally so; but mostly they looked beyond one as if seeking something, as if seeing into the unseen.

In the Spring of 1907 I signed on as second mate in the *Aladdin* at Liverpool, where the ship was owned, and took the train across the country to Newcastle where she was loading. I was excited. It was to be my first long trip; the itinerary that the owners had mapped out to me was: Newcastle, Bombay, Colombo, Hongkong; textiles and machinery from Newcastle to Bombay, rice from Bombay to Colombo, tea from Colombo to Hongkong.

I was becoming aware of the vastness of the world; I was going to the vast mysterious Orient. The very name had a charm and a fear; it was as far removed from the commonplaces of existence as the stars are from the moon.

I left Liverpool late one evening, curled up in my seat and slept soundly through the night. Before dawn I woke up feeling sick, a curious smell was assailing my nose, an insidious pungent smell. I roused myself and looked out into the departing night. Gas lamps burned feebly in the gloom; two-story houses, steep-roofed and desolate, huddled close together along the embankment. They seemed dead, blind and dead. The windows were dark; black niches in the pervading gloom, empty eye-sockets looking out upon the world unseeing.

Farther off somber chimneys reared against the sky from which rose slowly thin clouds of smoke, soaring heavenward like prayers from burning hearts. Farther still I saw glimpses of the dirty gray of the river where small smoke-emitting things crawled back and forth incessantly. Above to the north lay the city, clinging to the high hillside, and above all, the jagged, serrated skyline of Newcastle.

The city had awakened when I stepped off the train. Slowly I sauntered through the streets toward the docks. The squalor of the place was unthinkable; concentrated ugliness everywhere, and fog. Busses rumbled along the pavement, horse-drawn trucks clattered and screeched 'round corners, soot-smirched houses crowded the streets. At long intervals there were breaks in the lines of grimy buildings as if here and there a tooth had rotted down to the jawbone of rock in the city's multiple rows of teeth.

Passing along I saw interminable vistas of whisky signs, gaudy clothing shops, public-houses, restaurants, forbidding warehouses. Fat, florid, old women, baskets on arms, strutted about importantly; sailors strolled along, leisurely, hands tucked far into the horizontal pockets of their dungarees; dirty children, barefooted, bareheaded, ran about in the March slush at a pretense of play. The squalor seemed to be slowly strangling me. I longed for the sun, for the East, for the Orient.

At last I came to the docks. Here, too, the squalor persisted. The Tyne was incredibly dirty, yellowish brown and sluggish, a slovenly prostitute of commerce. A pall of fog and smoke hovered over the water and hid the farther side. Black imposing bridges, rooted in granite, hung suspended in the air like fingers pointing accusingly into the mist.

Swift, powerful tugs scooted from fog-bank to fog-bank, sometimes alone, sometimes with blunt-nosed barges in their wake. An irregular fence of masts and funnels lined the wharves beyond the ramparts of the dock-sheds, and a noise as of a carnival of devils rose from the loading and unloading ships.

Again commerce, the strident discords that constitute the symphony of commerce: the heavy rumbling of trucks, the clanking of chains, the screeching of whistles, the pounding of winches, the clanging of bells, the groaning of donkey-engines, the hiss of escaping steam. Ships of all nations contributed to the turmoil, ships not only from all parts of Britain, but from Germany, from France, from Norway, from Russia, from Denmark, from Spain, from the Colonies.

IN THIS international exposition of industry and enterprise I found the *Aladdin*, of Liverpool, a fine ship, a ship to be proud of; long, beautiful lines, a bow that bespoke speed—twelve knots at least—as fine a two-thousand-ton steamer as I have ever seen. She was loading—it was somewhat of a shock—printing-presses for Bombay. I did not like it; it did not harmonize with my conception of the East. Printing-presses spell the death of mysticism, of romance, of adventure. Printing-presses mean hard logic and dry facts.

Most decidedly I did not like this invasion of the charmed Orient by Occidental civilization. I liked the other part of our cargo—textiles—better; it suggested adventuresome trips into the jungle, trading with savages, pioneering. Aboard the ship the longshoremen held sway; all was bustle; they worked as if anxious to forestall an impending doom, as if their lives depended on the quick loading of the disillusioning printing-presses for Bombay.

Dodging up the gangway like an escaped thief I made my way amidships and knocked on a door that I guessed led to the captain's quarters. I heard a gruff voice say, "Come in!" and entered cap in hand.

Captain Findlay was sitting on a settee at the back of the room, under the porthole, an open book, a Bible, in front of him.

He gave me a look from under those frowning eyebrows of his that sent the jumps through me and made my eyes dance about the room; in the next second I looked at everything, at the ceiling, the walls, the floor, everything except those eyes. There wasn't much to be seen, to be sure: a white ceiling, sea-blue walls, a green carpet, a chair, a bunk half hidden behind curtains, charts, chronometers, a bookcase, a picture of the *Aladdin*, a picture of the company's new offices in Liverpool, and a large photograph of a girl, rather plump, stupid-looking, with abundant hair handled with Puritanical firmness, and wearing the redundant flounces of forty years ago.

"Well," he said sharply in a deep bass voice, "what do you want?"

He was looking impatiently into his Bible again, and I introduced myself awkwardly, hurriedly.

"All right," he said without looking up, "your cabin is down the passage, the second from the end. Get your duds aboard as quickly as you can and report to—to the mate. We sail in the morning."

He resumed his reading; I was dismissed.

I installed myself in my cabin—my luggage had arrived by this time—and went to look for the mate. I didn't find him; he was ashore spending his last day in England with his wife; but I found the chief engineer, Duncan, a big easy-going, fatherly Scotchman, who took me about and introduced me to the ship.

He was immensely proud of her; she might have been some near relation of his the way he gloated over her perfections. It was with unconcealed relish that he pointed to a brass plate that bore this inscription:

Harland & Wolf, Belfast, 1904.

"Just three years old," he said, shouting above the din of the docks, "and a beauty—cuts through the water like a liner—made four trips to the East already."

He crossed the deck, walking in true sailor fashion, slippered feet far apart, his big body swaying gently, slowly from side to side like a square-rigger becalmed.

Some coolie stokers squatted in a corner of the deck, yellow and fantastic, watching the fracas at the hatches, the apparent death-struggle between the dockers and the unwieldy crated machinery, and chattering at an incredibly rapid pace, that to the uninitiated seemed like nothing but a child playing with castanets. A bit of Eastern mystery amidst the brutal plainness of European civilization.

"How long has Captain Findlay had this ship?" I asked when we had reached the comparative quiet of the saloon-deck.

"He just joined the ship a month ago on her return home to be overhauled. Barker, who had her before him, was transferred to a bigger boat."

"And who is the first officer?" I inquired. "Is he a new man, too?"

"Pennington? 'Penny' we call him. No, he used to have your job—we didn't think he had it in him to get a mate's berth, but the owners evidently thought otherwise—well, some queer things happen."

He sighed meditatively.

A tall, angular individual, oil-bespattered, his face like a clown's decorated with black smudges, appeared at the end of the passage waving his arms excitedly, windmill fashion, his black hair hanging in a disorderly mass over the caverns of his eyes like a thatch. He screamed nervously—

"Oh, Chief, we want you in the engine-room!"

Then he disappeared.

Duncan looked after him with benevolent contempt. With a gesture expressive of good-humored despair and of irritated resignation he said apologetically:

"That's the second engineer—he seems to be excited—I suppose he can't fit a nut to a bolt down there. Well, I have to see what is the matter anyway."

And he waddled off at a toad's pace.

The voice of the harbor bellowed, moaned, groaned, shrieked and hissed throughout the day, far into the night. Only in the few darkest hours after midnight did it rest, exhausted, while the men, the pawns of this tremendous activity, snatched the sleep that would sustain them through another day, just another day. Long before dawn the clamor began again. Commerce blared her trumpets, beat her drums, shrilled her sirens, rattled her tambourines, and the strident discords of the symphony sent the men like ants back to their work.

I ROSE with the dawn, surprised that I had slept in the tumult, rose to work and adventure. I looked out of the port-hole, saw that the weather was clear, dashed some water in my face, swore at the obstinacy of my hair, hurried into coat and cap, bounded out of the door and—stopped. Outside I saw a strange sight.

The mate—I guessed it was he—was in the passage, in his shirt-sleeves, his cap balancing on the back of his head and a blubbering female hanging about his neck. He was a broad, middle-sized fellow, bow-legged, blond, blue-eyed, with a loose insolent mouth under a thick mustache. Of the woman I saw only the back, a large, formless, gaudy back. She was his wife, he told me later; and I believed him.

She had spent the night aboard and was now engaged in bidding him an effusive farewell. When he saw me, he shot me an irritated, ominous glance over the woman's heaving shoulder, and I hurried aft out of sight.

The boatswain already had the crew on deck, and we worked with a will battening down hatches, clearing the decks of débris and coal-dust, making ready for departure. At length the pilot appeared on the bridge along with the captain who, stern, patriarchal, enigmatical, was the inspiration of awe and uneasiness.

The blubbering female stood on the dock clutching a much-used handkerchief. The watchman ashore threw off the last hawsers; we swung into the river and followed the tide down-stream. Bridges opened before us and closed behind, shutting out the docks, shutting out the clamor, shutting out England.

After we were well out of the harbor, the two engineers, the mate and I breakfasted together in the mess-room. It was our last indulgence in sociability before submitting ourselves to the inexorable routine of the sea. With the captain on the bridge and the donkey-man in temporary charge of the engine-room, we enjoyed our irresponsibility. The meal was fine—we had ham and fresh eggs, I remember—and the easy motion of the ship brought on a luxurious feeling of well-being, of contentment with life.

The mate alone was grouchy; he hadn't gotten over his irritation of the morning, his embarrassment at the sight of me in the passage. He grumbled continually, against the ship, against the captain, against everything in general. And the engineers taunted him mercilessly.

"I wish they had transferred me, too," he said, scowling at nothing in particular, the "they" referring to the owners, "I wish they had put me in a decent-sized ship; I have sailed in this tub about long enough."

"Of course," jeered Thompson, the second engineer, beaming with derision, "they ought to have made you skipper of that new boat instead of Barker."

"She is a pretty good sort of tub all the same, Penny," said the chief consolingly.

"It's the captain I object to—" the mate resumed his declaration of grievances —"I don't like to sail under a man who does nothing but read his Bible. It isn't natural. It's uncanny. Why, it seems that he is deathly afraid of the East."

"Why?" I cut in, mystified.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Nobody knows—perhaps because he lost a ship out there in a collision five years ago. She was the biggest ship the company owned at the time, four thousand tons if I remember right. Since then he has never been east of Suez. He is afraid," he added contemptuously.

Duncan smiled broadly and drawled blandly, insinuatingly—

"I have known mates who are not overbrave."

His assistant exploded with laughter. He laughed violently, raucously, thrusting his long lank jaw far in the direction of the mate.

"That was a good one, wasn't it, Penny?" he rasped. "Do you remember that night in Calcutta?"

The mate glowered at him viciously, turned coppery red, glared at me and bounded out of the mess.

"What happened that time in Calcutta?" I asked.

"Nothing," Duncan lied.

Meanwhile the *Aladdin* gathered speed, sped on swiftly, silently, heedless of the eccentricities of those that manned her, demanding only her sacrifice of coal and oil from her coolie minions in the stoke-hole. She sped on. To the east was the sea, merging into the horizon; to the west the British coast, low, flat, criss-crossed with hedges and dotted with houses, like dark

scratches and pock-marks on the dismal brown-gray March landscape.

Toward evening of the next day we steamed into the Channel, sneaked in between the sentinel chalk-cliffs of Dover and Calais, by the age-stained, weather-worn walls of Dover Castle ablaze in the sun high upon the rocks, a relic of the mystery of dark ages, of ancient adventure. A flock of wild geese flew overhead—other adventurers, the vanguard of Summer.

The scenes changed; pictures changed. Ships passing in the night; abrupt gleams from lighthouses piercing the darkness; the swish of parting water before the bow sounding startlingly loud. Night passed. Again glimpses of land, black masses of rock in the distance. Then the far stretches of the sea, unbroken, limitless, eternal, bridging the abysses of the earth.

IN THE ordered monotony of our first week at sea nothing happened; but the atmosphere aboard assumed a gloomy aspect. The uneasiness that was to characterize this voyage was noticeable already the first morning and threatened to become chronic. It was undefinable but undeniable. I had a great deal of time to wonder about it, though I did not discuss it with any one.

I saw the mate only when I relieved him on the bridge—a fact which I considered a Heaven-sent boon—and the second engineer only when he happened to be delayed in the engine-room and came popping out on deck while I was on duty. Duncan I saw oftener; he was on my watch, and he had the habit of hanging over the rail staring into the water for half-hours at a time deeply immersed in contemplation of the receding waves. Occasionally when I passed he spoke to me.

The captain was all but invisible; he kept to his cabin, ate there, slept there, in the company of his Bible, his charts, his chronometers, and that absurd picture of the girl that had lived in another age. He was, however, a good sailor; when orders were needed, he emerged from his seclusion like an omniscient spirit.

At times in the night he would appear on the bridge, his sallow face looking unearthly white above his black flowing beard, immovable, staring into the darkness. His presence and his absence were alike disconcerting; his absence as well as his presence dominated the ship. He was an object for speculation, a background of mystery.

We coaled at Gibraltar. Late one night we approached the harbor. From afar we saw the glow of lighthouses that stood like blinking watchmen on either side of the strait. Streams of light crept down from the searchlights on the mountain and crawled about on the water as if seeking something inestimably precious. The *Aladdin* slid slowly, timorously into the harbor, nosed her way up to the dock, made fast and rested for the first time since she steamed out the Tyne.

When Pennington appeared in mess the next morning, he looked even more insolently overbearing than usual, as if he were the confidant of some grand personage, bearing State secrets locked in his brain. He sat down in triumphant silence. Outside on the dock a huge steam-shovel groaned and exerted itself, feeding coal into a chute that led to the belly of the ship.

"Did you see the captain last night?" said the mate at length, unable to retain at the same time his superiority and his secret.

"No," said I.

"Well," he said in a confidential whisper, "he was off his head last night, plumb crazy. He kept muttering, 'She will ram us, she will ram us!' and there wasn't a ship within half a mile."

He surveyed his audience with provoking condescension.

"What side did you sleep on last night?" asked Duncan sympathetically.

"I'm telling the truth," flared back the mate.

"Of course," mocked the second engineer. "Was he as scared as you were the time you ran afoul of that blooming Sikh in Calcutta?"

He let loose his high-pitched, comic-opera laugh, pointing his long ridiculous jaw in Pennington's face.

The mate put down his cup of tea with a clatter, sputtered impotently, turned livid with rage.

"How often do I have to tell you," he roared, "that I was not afraid of that blasted Hindu! I didn't want his woman! I ran because I had an appointment to keep, not because I was afraid! You—you—you—you——"

He choked and coughed violently.

"And to think," chuckled the vindictive Thompson, "that that blooming Sikh only looked at you after you kissed his woman. Was it your tender conscience that got into your legs? Do you remember, Duncan, the beautiful tumble he took when he turned the corner of the bazaar?"

And he laughed again his star-comedian laugh, loudly, insinuatingly, mercilessly. I, too, smiled; I could see bow-legged, blustering Pennington running for his life.

Meanwhile he sat there dark as a thunder-cloud, fuming and sputtering invectives, ludicrous, a caricature of some heathen god of wrath.

These squabbles were common and never quite settled; they were certain to break out on the least provocation. The warfare was continual, a sort of guerrilla warfare of words. But I was little concerned, I was a non-combatant. The East beckoned, the lure of the East; I was interested only in that; I had eyes but for the changing scenes.

Gibraltar was left behind; the cliff grew smaller, less awesome; the cluster of palms on the African shore retreated into the landscape; the Mediterranean, blue, immense, Summery, predominated, was our world. And beyond that India was dreaming, a fascinating mystery overshadowing, to me almost obliterating, the mystery of the *Aladdin*, the strange uneasiness emanating from the captain.

The low Egyptian shore hove into view, beautiful, bathed in the sunlight, nourished by the Nile, green as a pasture in paradise. But soon this beauty passed like a splendid dream; the desert approached, low, desolate, dismal, and in the midst of this desolation, Port Said.

At this noisy, dirty outpost of the Orient, this caravansary for Eastern trading-ships, we coaled again, and then with our bunkers filled steamed slowly into the canal and through this gap in the desert passed like proud emissaries of Occidental civilization into the Red Sea, the hallway of the Orient. A new kind of squalor revealed itself: arid sand-swept plains flanked by bleak hills and ruled over by a merciless sun. The heat became almost intolerable; the iron decks burned at the touch; distant objects, the coast and the mountains beyond the coast, seemed to waver and dance in the shimmering haze that overhung the sea.

It was degenerating. We became too lazy, positively too lazy, even to eat. The hurricane deck, covered imperfectly by an awning, was the only comfortable spot on board. As for the stoke-hole, with no breeze blowing into the ventilators, it must have been about unbearable; but somehow the coolies bore it.

The lights of Mecca gleamed low over the water on the port side. A P. & O. liner, homeward bound, had just passed us, silently, like a thought born of the darkness. The air was calm and cool after the intense heat of the day. The night was beautiful; the stars shone with a lustrous brilliancy peculiar to desert and sea. They seemed to have a touch of humanness; they seemed highly intellectual, understanding, and almost femininely vain mirroring themselves in the shining placid sea.

I was leaning over the railing in front of the wheelsman, musing, dreaming about the East, when I heard steps behind. It was the captain, very correctly dressed in a white cotton suit and white uniform cap. He walked slowly, haltingly, a painful frown on his face and a look in his eyes that had fear, terror in it. Suddenly he exclaimed, almost screamed to the helmsman:

"PORT the helm! Quick! Don't you see her lights? Do you want her to ram us?"

Surprised, shocked by my carelessness I looked about, rubbed my eyes, looked everywhere—there were no lights! Something akin to a chill crept down my spine.

"Sir," I said, "you are mistaken. There are no lights."

He looked at me, through me, beyond me, with those awful eyes of his.

"What the devil!" he roared, then checked himself with a convulsive effort and looked away. "Well," he said. "All right."

He turned and left the bridge.

I stared after him in an imbecile fashion, I fear; then resumed my former position.

"Sir," said the sailor.

"Yes—what is it?"

"You don't happen to know if the captain keeps liquors in his cabin, do you, sir?"

"That is none of your business," I said as harshly as I could.

"Aye, aye, sir."

This incident troubled me, worried me

for a time; it seemed to bear out Pennington's hints; but soon it lost its freshness, and while I did not forget it, it ceased to worry me. I ascribed it to the heat, or drink, or dope; thought it of little importance. The nearness of the East was responsible for this easy optimism; it was the charm of the unknown, the singular attraction of the unseen.

Through the current of the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb we escaped into the Arabian Sea, and after coaling again at Aden, a desolate cluster of houses and huts roosting in the crater of an extinct volcano, stood out to sea for India. India! I felt like shouting. Bombay! The name had a singular foreign flavor; it savored of beauty and adventure and grotesque pagan gods. Just a week more at sea.

The weather was fine, a clear sky and a blazing sun most of the time, and a little sea after we got into the trade-winds. On the whole the trip was pleasant and uneventful, though I noticed a gradual change in the captain. He seemed more restless; he sought the bridge more, began to haunt it in fact—I suppose his cabin was too hot for comfort, even though it contained his charts and chronometers and that old picture, that picture of the Puritanical girl.

It was disconcerting to have him on the bridge; he disturbed my mind, but still—still I could not help feeling sympathetic toward him. There was something very pathetic about him, that fixed expression of wo about the eyes, for instance; and that fearful searching of the sea, especially at night, for some unseen danger.

The mate, too, had changed somehow. His manners had become ingratiating; he treated me like the proverbial long-lost brother. Since there was no apparent cause for this change, I concluded there was something he wished me to do, something that for some reason or other he didn't want to do himself. I wasn't wrong.

Early in the morning on which we sighted land, he joined me on the bridge. I was on duty; the captain was below. He began to talk—his chief business in life, it seemed.

"So," he said, "you have never been in India before."

I expressed a superfluous negation.

"It's a fine country," he said meditatively. "Lot of women — first-class whisky——"

For a moment he lost himself in anticipated joys, then regretfully returned to the ship.

"I want you to be candid with me," he said confidentially. "What do you think of the captain?"

"I suppose he is all right," I replied guardedly.

"That is what he isn't," he wagged his head to emphasize the statement. "He is off his head. It's plain as daylight."

After waiting in vain for an answer he continued smirkingly:

"If I were you I would report him to the harbor commission at Bombay. I would do it myself if I hadn't a wife at home."

This last was an obscure point. His wife at home seemed to me to be an irrelevant factor that had nothing to do with the affair; but I did not contradict him; for the moment I had forgotten everything concerning the ship. India, the paradise of my dreams, was taking shape, becoming real, rising out of the ocean, meeting me. All that I had hoped it to be it seemed to be; beautiful, full of mystery, fraught with an unfathomable meaning.

Slowly it came nearer. Soft velvety greens became visible everywhere; palms and a luxuriant undergrowth of jungle hedged in the coast, the city, the islands in the bay, the shelves of rice-fields that like steps for a mighty god mounted to the inland hills.

The captain was on the bridge, calm, efficient, patriarchal. I began to doubt the soundness of my memory; the incident in the Red Sea seemed preposterous, unbelievable; yet still, still . . . .

Duncan, whose attitude toward me had assumed a benevolent fatherliness, volunteered as my guide on my first excursion ashore in this land of beauty and mystic dreams. The first glance of the inner harbor had been disappointing. It reminded me of that hotbed of commerce, Newcastle. Vistas of wharves and quays; ships of many nationalities: English, Dutch, French, Norwegian and a solitary steamer flying the Stars and Stripes of the United States.

The noise and the bustle were here, too, the discordant symphony of trade. Only the dockers were different. They were children of the East, sandaled, turbaned,

dark, sinuous in their movements and mysterious. One wondered whether they felt like white men, thought like white men, died like white men. They were a profound enigma.

The city itself was Eastern, unmistakably so, picturesquely so; even the Victoria railway terminus, with its opulent architecture, its lavish decorations, its towers and minarets,—even to the statue perched high on its dome, was Oriental, Indian; it might have been the palace of some fabled maharajah.

Near this terminus I received one of my strongest impressions of this first intimate view of the East. Curious that a beggar should make such a profound impression, but he did. He seemed to typify the dignity, the fatalism of the East. He was old, his straggly beard white, his eyes sightless. His turban was a medley of colors; a kaftan of white cotton covered his lean body. But it was the bearing of the attenuated figure that gripped me.

He seemed more like a statue, a statue with a hoarse mechanical voice, than a human being. His spirit seemed to have left the body leaning against the wall, while it flew untrammeled to other spheres. He seemed at once to be a true representative of the East and a contrast to the motley crowds that passed him by with graceful, gliding, rhythmical movements.

LATE in the afternoon something happened that rather marred our keen enjoyment in the pilgrimage ashore; certainly it disturbed our minds. We were drinking tea in the Kapad Bazaar, sitting near the main entrance, when a person we knew well came in. He didn't appear to be looking for company, so we remained silent, unseen.

He looked about furtively, as if ashamed to be there, sneaked up to a fakir's booth and hurriedly bought a heathen charm. It was guaranteed, so an inscription in bad English above the booth said, to avert danger from evil spirits, bad luck, wild animals and several other more or less fantastic things, besides reserving for the bearer a berth in the Mussulman's paradise.

The buyer was Captain Findlay. He sneaked out again, pushing his way rapidly through the throng. We stared after him, nonplused. Why did he want the charm? Why the secrecy? What new inconsistency had arisen in his character? Hitherto he had pored over his Bible, now he bought heathen charms! The two things did not seem to harmonize. The incident awakened fresh misgivings, fed the old uneasiness.

"Wonder what ails Findlay?" I said to Duncan when we were at last making our way back to the ship, away from the fascinating life of the city.

He pondered awhile, lifted his cap and scratched his head.

"I don't know," he confessed. "He seems sane enough whenever I happen to see him. I don't like it though. I feel in my bones that something is wrong."

"The mate wants me to report him to the harbor commission," I said.

"Don't you do it, my lad. Do what Penny orders you to do—you have to do that, you know—but never do what he asks you to do. He is a cheap edition of a man, a sixpenny affair. I never could stand him since that time in Calcutta."

"Well," said I, "I don't think Findlay is quite rational."

"We will watch him, and if he goes off his head entirely, we will cable the owners."

It never occured to the honest Scotchman that there might not be time for that; that something might happen suddenly.

"It is all Penny's business, anyway," he grumbled irritably.

Bombay was wonderful but too hot for comfort. I explored the city and the environs; and I watched the coolie dock-hands struggle with the clumsy crated printing-presses just as I had watched the longshoremen at Newcastle. Again I felt a sharp disappointment.

I foresaw the time when the enchantment of the East would become articulate, would become commonplace, staring at one from between the covers of books. Hardly were the holds emptied, before they were filled again, this time with rice for Colombo, and chests of opium for Hongkong.

Bombay dropped behind, sank slowly below the horizon, shrouded with palms. Other beauties arose, other pictures were unveiled, as beautiful, as grand. The Malabar coast was a revelation of soft luxuriance, a mute eloquent splendor. The palm-fringed coast; the terraced table-land; and farther back, lofty wooded hills. And with this a faint aroma, a tropic languor, heat and a limpid blue sea.

Captain Findlay behaved strangely.

Possibly he wasn't mad yet—at least he had moments of sanity—but if ever I saw a hunted, haunted man it was he. I think he realized his strange behavior and fought against it, blindly, hopelessly. He began to read his Bible again, shut up in his cabin with his charts and chronometers and that picture on the wall. Somehow I could not forget that picture; it seemed to be a part of this slow silent tragedy.

Findlay was sick, deathly sick—with fear. Fear of madness, and then at times the fear of the other thing that I couldn't see, a phantom ship that seemed to pursue us, that he was always watching for and fleeing from. He seemed hardly to sleep; most of the night he spent on the bridge, pacing restlessly to and fro, sometimes muttering incoherently, thinking aloud in snatches, and in these mutterings two names were ever recurring: "Estelle" and "Martha." But generally he was silent, brooding, melancholy.

Only once did he speak to me directly. As usual in the dead of night he emerged from his den and began to pace the deck irresolutely with sporadic flashes of determination, always scanning the sea with painful vigilance. Suddenly he joined me at my post ahead of the pilot-house. His eyes wandered from me to the ship, to the sky, to the sea, resting at last on the distant retreating horizon.

"How is it with your soul?" he asked in low unearthly tones that conjured up visions of death and damnation.

Confused and irritated I murmured something, some stupid conventional remark about not having thought of it, had no opinion in fact, which was the truth as far as it went.

"A sailor's life is full of dangers," he said hesitatingly as if reciting a half-forgotten lesson. "We live today and are dead tomorrow. The sea, the sky, the wind are alike our enemies, aye, even the hands of man and God are raised against us. I have seen men, aye, and women, aye, and children, hale and hearty at sunset that never lived to see the dawn of another day. Prepare your soul, young man, before—before——"

He broke off, his eyes dilated, and an agonized whisper was wrung from his lips:

"There she is again! God, will she never let me be!"

"You are mistaken, sir," I said, oddly stirred, "there is nothing there."

He looked at me, his eyes abnormally large and feverish, wiped his forehead with a trembling hand, smiled a ghastly smile like a soul in torment, and left the bridge.

"What do you think of it?" I asked Duncan the morning of the day we were due to arrive at Colombo.

We were messing together before going on duty. He ate his bacon reflectively, the depth of his thoughts revealed by the thoroughness of his chewing.

"Well," he said finally, "the whole thing is queer, no doubt. But after all nothing has happened."

"It gives one a mighty uncomfortable feeling, though," said I.

"I agree with you," he admitted reluctantly. "I don't know why, but it seems to me that Findlay is living two lives, sailing in two ships at the same time; that is, when he is rational, he commands the *Aladdin*, and when he isn't—well—quite normal, he seems to think he has charge of quite another ship. It makes a fellow lose his appetite."

He laid down his knife and fork disgustedly.

"I suppose," I said, "we can put up with it."

"It won't kill us at any rate—by the way, what is Penny saying to you about it?"

"Nothing. I suppose he is offended since I didn't report the captain to that commission at Bombay."

"Well, he has said a lot to me, and I shouldn't be surprised to hear he has been pestering Thompson, too. That fellow is as cheap as his nickname and as brave as a cuttlefish."

He was indignant. He hauled out a piece of tobacco, bit into and tugged at it, energetically, with his teeth.

"I am not," he continued as an afterthought, "so sure I'd rather sail with a sane man like Penny, for instance, as skipper, than with a man like Findlay, though no doubt he is crazy."

The coast of Ceylon came nearer, grew magically, green, picturesque, magnificent, washed by white surf at the shore, low, rising gently to the abrupt slopes of verdure-clad peaks, its beauty screened by dense jungle broken occasionally by inlets leading like gateways into the heart of the

enchantment. Crude native catamarans with bamboo masts and cotton sails scooted along the coast. Small thatched huts, hardly larger than dogs' kennels, were disclosed in the jungle by the nearer view.

Suddenly the *Aladdin* curved 'round a palm-covered promontory, and we entered the harbor of Colombo. Again the shock of disappointment, the loading and unloading vessels, the smoke-belching tugs, the clamor, the strife, the mad rush of trade. But also the exquisite charm of the East, the domes and spires, the gorgeous temples for grotesque gods.

Thompson was standing in the engine-companion when I went forward after the ship was moored to the wharf.

"Hello!" he called out shrilly, "do you know what Penny has been telling me?"

"No," I lied, "what has he been telling you?"

"He wants me to make a fool of myself. He says the captain is crazy, and wants me to notify the harbor authorities, or cable the king, or something of that sort."

"Well, are you going to do it?"

"I am going to attend to my business, and that means taking care of the engines in this ship and not reporting the captain."

He walked forward with me.

"Penny only wants the command of the ship anyway," he continued, "and I'd rather be hanged than help him. He expects some one else to do his dirty work and get the glory himself—the sneak!"

He swore viciously.

AFTER a week in port, the *Aladdin* started on the last leg of her long trip half-way around the globe. The coast of Ceylon, the palms, the picturesque rocks of the southern shore, sank into the ocean behind. The lighthouse of Great Bassas gleamed fitfully, sleeplessly, in the night until that, too, disappeared. The heat was intense, relentless, in spite of the monsoon, in spite of the sea, in spite of the swift sure motion of the ship.

It was bearable for a well man, but hell, and worse, for the sick. And Captain Findlay was sick. Daily it became more apparent, more irremediable. And we were helpless. We knew how to handle a ship, but a man, like Findlay—no—that we had not learned. The only remedy for illness we knew was quinine, and one can't administer quinine for a sick mind, a mind haunted by phantoms.

I have seen men in physical agony, seen them suffer, seen them die; but nothing that I had seen before was so pitiful, so tormenting as this unfounded, growing terror in the captain. It seemed to grip his soul with inquisitorial mercilessness, to put it on the rack, to quarter it. It became steadily worse, nourished as it was by the heat; but still it did not kill.

The look of profound misery on his face deepened, became like a mask in fixedness. He ate little; he slept not at all; he read his Bible in the daytime without getting any apparent comfort, and spent his nights on the bridge pacing back and forth restlessly, always searching the sea with strained, glowing eyes. For long periods he would remain silent, then he would talk incoherently, fragmentarily, about "Estelle," "Martha," "my wife," and "my children." The strong man babbled like a child.

I was puzzled about "Estelle" and "Martha" and their connection with "my wife" and "my children." They were always associated in his speech; a connection there was, obscure, but vital. I asked Duncan. He didn't know. I asked Pennington. He professed to be ignorant.

It was Findlay himself who solved the riddle, partly at least. He seemed more cheerful that night, though not more sane. He talked to me, slowly, confidentially, staring at me with bright feverish eyes that sent chills crawling down my spine.

"I was reading in the Bible today," he said, leaning over to me, "and I came upon a great passage. It said that those that seek shall find. It was immensely comforting. You know," he lowered his voice perceptibly, "you know I have my wife along on this trip, and my grandchildren, Alice and Winton. They are Mary's children—Mary is my daughter—and they are going to England to go to school.

"But I have been much distressed lately for the children are hiding from me. I can't find them. I have been looking for them a long time. They are playing a prank on their granddad, the little beggars. I am worried about my wife, too. She looks funny. She looks just as she did forty years ago when I first met her. Her hair is combed straight back, and she is

dressed in a large flounced crinoline—all starched, you know. She is always with me in my cabin, but won't come out on deck.

"But I am worrying most about the children; they ought not to hide from me. I will find them, though, when we get to England. It won't take long; the *Martha* is a good ship; she will make it in six weeks. I will find them, the Bible says it. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," I assented, humoring him, "I think you will, sir."

"The Bible says it," he repeated, his eyes wandering over the sea. "And besides I have a charm."

He chuckled slyly.

He became silent, and when he spoke again he had forgotten my presence.

"It was all a dream," he whispered. "My wife and children were not drowned; we were not run down that night in the Strait of Singapore."

The mate was jubilant. He considered himself vindicated, upheld by Providence. His insolent mouth, his bristling mustache, his blue watery eyes, even his out-caving legs assumed a what-did-I-tell-you attitude. He seemed to think that Findlay's madness was due as a reparation for all he had endured at the hands of the engineers.

His manners became exasperating, atrocious. He forgot everything but his own perspicacity. He cut his watches below short so that he might parade his unprepossessing personality on deck the more. He made himself a nuisance, an eye-sore; but he lacked the gumption to take the command away from Findlay.

The weather continued hot and the captain continued to get worse; that haunting obsession became stronger; it occupied his mind, dominated him. He became grayer, thinner; the fire of his eyes more feverish. He was an awesome, yet a pathetic figure, a perpetual reminder of man's changeful fate, of the tyranny of time and of memory, and of the infectious melancholy of the sea.

He was a monument, an ironic monument of life, to life, by life. It was pitiful to see him lose his mind; but it was infinitely worse to watch him lose his dignity, the respect of his crew. He did, finally; and it was by no means strange.

He seemed to be obsessed with the idea that we were all going to die. Like a half-crazed, hell-and-damnation evangelist, he went about saying to the men in that grave-like, even voice of his:

"How is it with your soul? Are you ready to die?"

His insistence on the subject was uncanny, demoralizing. It gave us the creeps to hear that patriarchal madman like a uniformed Jeremiah utter his doleful" Wo, wo." To the superstitious sailors he was a prophet of evil, despised and feared. It broke down the discipline; we had difficulty handling the men.

I tried to save him once—but only once. Afterward I thought it advisable to leave him alone, to pursue the road of his perverted fancies. He was talking to the man at the wheel that night. I could hear the sepulchral voice and that horror-pervaded question:

"How is it with your soul? Are you ready to die?"

"Sir," I said impatiently, determined if possible to divert his attention from the subject of death, "sir, there is a ship yonder."

I was not prepared for what followed. As if in a trance he came toward me, his face livid, his eyes fixed and staring, his limbs atremble, his lips moving convulsively.

"Is it she?" he whispered hoarsely, "is it the *Estelle* of Bristol? Why is she always following me? Why can't she leave me alone?

He broke down, actually sobbed.

"Save us, oh Lord," he prayed, "save us. It's the children she wants; she wants to kill the little children. May she be damned, damned, damned!"

He raised his clenched hands toward heaven, but in doing so his eyes fell upon the steamer, a German liner, and he dropped his arms again, relieved, as if his prayer had been fulfilled, and muttered:

"No, no, it isn't she! Not yet, not yet——"

It was with a deep sense of relief that we entered the Strait of Malacca. Singapore meant the end of the agony. The case would be reported, investigated, reported again, and, when all the red tape was exhausted, finally settled. It was odious but preferable.

The Malay Peninsula emerged from the sea, coming nearer, rising higher. We saw it first as a long dark streak, then as a low

mountain range, then as a dense impenetrable jungle. The coast was low and ugly, stretches of sandy beach, dim foliage of mangrove-swamps, hideous mud-flats succeeding one another in a sordid disheartening panorama, a slum of the magnificent East.

THEN the unforeseen happened as it always will. When all seems well and safe, something turns up that entirely overthrows the firmest expectations, as if Providence delighted in playing pranks with men, in tormenting them, in letting them go their own ways, mold their own destiny, until an expectation is assuming the guise of reality, when suddenly the incalculable factor appears and in a moment destroys forever the equation.

It was about four in the morning. I had just relieved Pennington on the bridge. The captain was there as usual, an inauspicious figure in white flannels pacing the deck restlessly on the port side. Now and then he stopped to stare into the water. The night was calm and clear, the sky bright, the sea almost mirror-like. We swung into the Strait of Singapore; its long narrow reach lay like a river before us, an inland river with magnificent woods on the banks.

The lights and the shadowy outline of a steamer appeared in the darkness ahead of us, hugging the northern shore. As far as I could make out she was a ship of about three thousand tons, seemed heavily loaded, and moved at a rather slow speed; a common type of freighter. There was nothing distinguishing about her, and nothing interesting.

I watched her idly; she was a convenient object on which to rest my eyes. In comparison with the *Aladdin* she was abnormally clumsy; she also seemed neglected, like an abused wife. I remember distinctly the last thought I had before the commotion started. I was thinking that if I were aboard her, I would have her lanterns cleaned, especially the one forward on her masthead.

Her course lay about a hundred yards off our port side, and she might have been about two hundred and fifty yards ahead of our bows, when all suddenly a sharp command rang out behind me—

"Starboard the helm!"

I turned instantly, doubting my hearing. A ship bearing down on our port side and a command to starboard the helm! It was an insane order given by a madman. Of course it was Findlay. But a different Findlay.

This man was not childish, irresolute, full of fear, any longer; terror evidently had at last shocked him into determination; the spirit of his better days had arisen to reinforce his frenzy. He was formidable that night; he was dangerous. I felt it, and the sailor at the wheel felt it.

"Aye, aye, sir," he said, and actually swung the ship over a point or two.

"Hold your course!" I roared, and turning shouted to the man on the forecastle head to call the mate.

But Findlay would not give in; he was dominated by his single mad idea. Snatching a hatchet from the pilot-house wall he brandished it aloft like a medieval warrior and shouted in stentorian tones:

"I will save my ship! I will save my ship!" And exultantly—"I have her at last; she sha'n't kill the children; she sha'n't pursue me any more!"

The wheelsman, terrified, in fear of his life, ducked away and fled down on the lower deck. Findlay grabbed the wheel and swung it over. He had dropped the ax. I jumped at him. He was strong, however, stronger than I had thought. I expected him to weaken, to back away; but he didn't; he fought. We struggled madly, and even as we struggled I knew the ship was obeying her rudder, turning across the channel, heading for the vulnerable side of the other ship. I tried to break away, made a rush for the wheel, but stumbled.

A terrific blow hit me in the face, flush on the jaw; and the next instant I sprawled on the deck, dazed, helpless; but still somehow, able to think, to imagine things. I knew the other ship could not suspect the truth; when she noticed our altered course, she would swerve over, try to get nearer the shore, and expose her entire side I tried to get up, but couldn't.

I could think, I could plan, but my limbs refused to obey, my nerves seemed paralyzed. The agony increased; each moment each fraction of a moment, brought a fuller realization of the impending tragedy. It seemed a horrible dream, but I knew it was the terrible truth.

Then there was a moment, eternal it seemed, of still intensity, of maddening suspense, of growing horror. A voice shrieked into the night—

"Are you mad?"

A siren shrilled. Then a deafening crash, a rending of steel plates.

The impact threw me against the railing in front. The shock restored me somewhat; I rose unsteadily and scrambled to the wheel. I signaled the engine-room for full speed ahead. I had but one thought, to keep the nose of the *Aladdin* in the side of the other ship until she sank. There was a wild scramble down on the deck, curses, cries, orders—and Findlay? I shall never forget it

He stood near the starboard life-boat, in his spotless but somewhat wrinkled white uniform, his sallow upturned face and bald head gleaming white and ghastly like a dead man's, his arms stretched outward and upward as if in rapturous prayer. Then he began to chant, slowly, solemnly—the doxology! I hope I shall never hear it again under such circumstances! The bustle, the cries, the curses and then that solemn chant—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow——"

It was ludicrous and awful.

Finally he stopped, dropped his arms to his sides, and I heard him pray, wearily but distinctly—

"Now let Thy servant depart in peace."

He went aft, hesitatingly, and disappeared forever. A sailor said afterward that he had seen him at the taffrail, and that later he had heard a splash.

The strange ship sank slowly; the *Aladdin* clung to her side, tenaciously, like an obstinate bulldog. But at last she foundered; the yawning hole back of her funnel would not be denied. Her crew was safe aboard the *Aladdin;* we backed away and stood by watching her go down.

First she listed over to port, lay there irresolutely for a moment, then she disappeared swiftly, her masthead lights sticking out of the sea, forlornly, long after the hull had vanished.

But as she glided down into the water, her after part rose high in the air, and I saw in the sheen of the water and the glow of the stars her name written in large letters over her stern. It was the *Estelle* of Bristol.

Call it chance if you like, but I call it Fate.

INDUCEMENT

BY IRA SOUTH

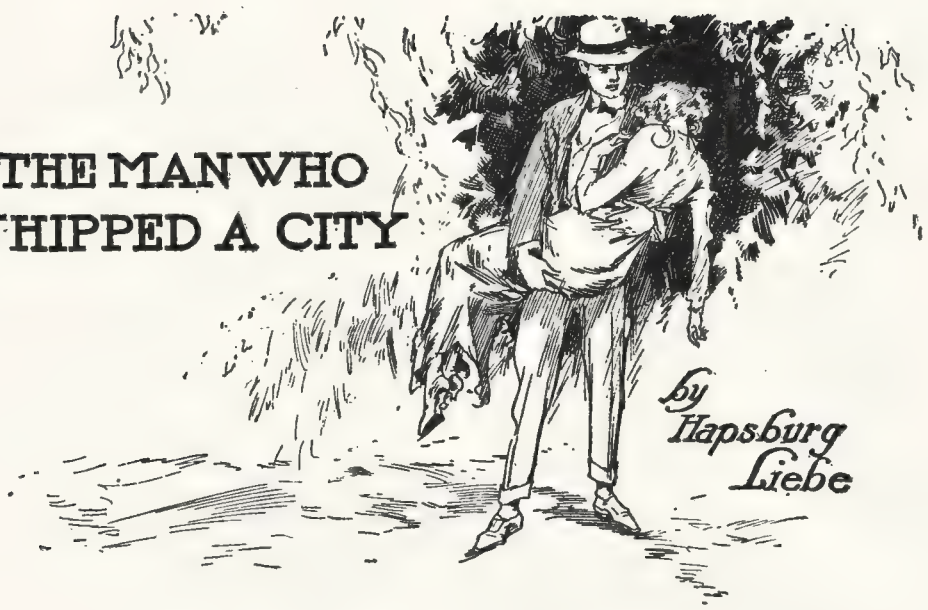
THEIR songs all sing the open road,
And yet, by curious turn,
It's not for the endless trail at all
That the wandering brethren yearn.

They make the ports unknown to call,
But dream in every clime
Of spreading wide their peaceful tents,
In some far happy time.

It's searching out this resting-place
Their roving lives are spent;
They would lay a hearth and dig them wells
In the country of content.

And just behind yon sea-blue hill,
No man can surely say—
May lie the blessed slopes they seek,
To settle down for aye.

THE MAN WHO WHIPPED A CITY



Author of "The Wise Man," "The Cross at Purgatory Fork," etc.

THERE is nothing that a man may hate so bitterly and at the same time love so devotedly as his home town. Young Peter Huntley hated Westover because it had named him a ruffian and a brawler when he was only a good and quick fighter, and because it had fleeced his father of the price of a magnificent plantation. He loved Westover because it was the home of his boyhood and of the sweetheart who had agreed to wait for him for five years without even an exchange of letters.

Huntley had asked for five years in which to make something of himself. No letters were to be exchanged because all Westover postmasters were tools of "Judge" Urhart, who was Marian's father and the Big Boss of the entire county.

Westover was a beautiful little city. Along a crystal-clear river it lay, in a rather narrow valley. It had many stately old maples, and many handsome old residences; in the warmer months it was a veritable fairyland of roses and lilies and honeysuckles. There was hardly a middle class. Most of the people, by far, were either rich or poor. All the former lived on an avenue an eighth of a mile broad, through the center of which the sparkling river flowed; the halves of this pretty thoroughfare were called North Riverside and South Riverside.

The less fortunate lived in scrupulously clean, honeysuckle-bordered little houses that climbed the two slopes of the valley in a very orderly fashion. A dozen manufacturing plants on the river below town furnished employment for those who had to work with their hands; the wealthy of Westover owned those plants.

When the five years were almost gone, Peter Huntley left Indiana and started back to Tennessee to see whether his Marian had forgotten. He feared she had. A girl of eighteen, he told himself, was too young to make promises covering five years of time.

Peter arrived in Westover at noontime on the fateful day. When he had had luncheon at the inn, he dressed himself smartly all in white save for a gray Norfolk coat, and set out for a great sycamore tree that stood on the river's north bank at the upper edge of town. All along the main avenue he met people whom he instantly recognized, but none of them recognized him. Even old Judge Urhart, who had known him exceedingly well, stared at him blankly as he bowled past in a purring six-cylinder car.

Huntley reached the shrine of his boyhood

an hour before the appointed time, and sat down on a stone to wait. The old sycamore was to him the same gaunt, good friend it had been in his earlier youth; the only change he noticed was that the initials and the date he had cut in the white bark exactly five years before were now grown over and dim. Peter rose, took out his knife and renewed the letters and figures.

Then he sat down and began to watch his gold repeater religiously. He tried to prepare himself for disappointment by saying over and over:

"A girl of eighteen doesn't know herself. I needn't hope. It's silly."

And each time there came, like an echo, this from his memory:

"If I'm alive, Peter, I'll meet you here at three o'clock, five years from today."

When at last his watch told him it was three, he rose disheartenedly. Though he had tried hard to brace himself for the blow, he hadn't done it; it staggered him. He became bitter. What a fool's paradise he had been living in! All women were like that, of course. Not only this woman, but all women. . . .

There was the sound of dragging footsteps out to his right, and his heart paused in its beating. He half turned and looked.

"Marian!"

And then he stood aghast at that which he saw. It was Marian who stood there before him, but it was not the Marian that he had known. The other Marian had been supple and roundish, bright-eyed and laughing, full of life as a robin, pretty as a dawn in June. This girl was death-white and pitifully thin; she was like the ghost of the other Marian.

"I've had typhoid, Peter," she explained, in a voice that he barely heard. "Peter, dear," she went on in the same weak voice, "I told you I'd be here to meet you at three this afternoon if I were alive, didn't I? Well, I am here; but I'm afraid you'll have to carry me back. I got out of bed and stole away—I could hardly dress myself—Peter, I didn't forget my promise to you——"

She was in his arms long before she finished speaking. Then she collapsed. Huntley was a strong man; he carried her as he would have carried a baby, only more tenderly. And as he went down the river, he swore at himself because he had doubted that she would come.

When he reached the big brick and granite home of Judge Urhart and his daughter, the neighborhood had been alarmed by the nurse. Word had been telephoned to Marian's father, and he was just arriving, with the doctor beside him, in his automobile. Huntley carried the limp figure to a bed the nurse showed him, and put it down carefully. The doctor stepped to the bedside, and at that moment the girl opened her eyes.

"I'm all right now," she said.

Urhart hastily questioned the nurse.

"She must have been delirious," the white-clad woman told them. "She sent me on an errand, and went out while I was gone."

Urhart seemed satisfied with the explanation; but the doctor narrowed his gaze and shook his head.

"She was getting along so well," he muttered. "I don't see how she could be delirious at this stage."

After receiving assurance that his daughter was not much the worse for her exertion, Urhart motioned to Huntley to follow and then led the way to the library. The old ex-judge was a tall, lean man with mutton-chop whiskers, a sharp profile and a hard mouth. In the library he turned upon Huntley with a frown that would have disconcerted a lesser man.

"Whom," he asked, "have I to thank for this service?"

"Don't you know me, Judge?" smiled Peter.

That smile was like pulling front teeth, but the other happened to be Marian's father.

"I'm Peter Huntley."

The older man had not forgotten—and, indeed, few other Westoverites had forgotten—the youthful peccadilloes of Peter Huntley, whom they had named a brawler and a ruffian because he had fought so much. But now Urhart forced himself to appear both grateful and glad to see Huntley. They shook hands. The rather strained situation was relieved a few minutes later by the abrupt entrance of the Urhart family physician.

"Miss Urhart wishes to see the gentleman who brought her back," he said.

"She wishes to thank you personally, Huntley," the girl's father chose to believe. "Go on."

ANOTHER minute found Huntley in Marian's room. When she saw him, Marian smiled and pointed to a chair.

"Draw it up, Peter," she invited, "and sit down."

Peter did so. He bent toward her.

"Maybe you shouldn't talk, Marian."

"I've got to, Peter. A little. Now tell me about yourself. Tell me what you did in those five years."

"First," Huntley began, "I tried to make a business man of myself. But I couldn't do it. It made me fidgety to sit still all the time. Then I went in for electricity. I am now a very capable electrical engineer. Are you—" he glanced toward the nurse, and whispered this—"very much disappointed?"

Marian smiled.

"Oh, no, Peter. Listen: you can get a position here, maybe. You see, we're putting in a dam and power-plant four miles up the river. It's to be municipally owned and controlled. The city floated a hundred thousand in bonds for it. Father's at the head of it; he's mayor of Westover again. See father, get the place, and—" in a whisper—"try to make him like you well enough to give us his permission—I'm tired, Peter—I'll have to let you go. The nurse isn't looking, Peter——"

Huntley kissed her slyly, bade her good-by, and hurried back to the library. Old Urhart seemed displeased at the length of his stay.

"Your daughter," Peter explained, "was telling me about the new dam and power-plant."

Westover's Big Boss brightened at once.

"It's going to make money for us, Huntley. You see, we're going to furnish juice to two other towns besides this. Everything is nearly ready now. By the time we can locate a good engineer to take charge of the plant——"

"I'm your man," Huntley interrupted; he couldn't help it. "I'm a first-class electrical engineer, if I do say it myself. And I'll work for you and old Westover just a little cheaper than I'd work for anybody else."

For a moment Urhart seemed at a loss to know what to say. At last he blurted:

"You'll have to see Alden, Huntley. He's the contractor, and he is to find the electrician. You remember Farnsworth Alden, of course?"

At the mention of the name, the younger man's face clouded. Certainly, he remembered Farnsworth Alden, contractor. Alden had been one of the chief men of that ring that had robbed his good old father to the very bone of him—it had been done mostly within the law, but to the bone just the same.

Huntley controlled his feelings as well as he could, and told Judge Urhart good-by for the time being.

He was undecided as to just what he was going to do. He believed that Marian's father would see that he did not get the position he wanted, simply because he was Peter Huntley. Moreover, he very heartily disliked having to ask a job of a man whom he detested as he detested Farnsworth Alden. The Huntleys had a high old pride in them, and Peter had as much of it as any of the rest.

He went back to the inn, changed his clothes, and shortly afterward boarded a train for a neighboring town to visit his parents. He found his father running a little grocery store almost at a loss because of the big heart he had in him.

When the evening meal was over, the three of them, father and mother and son, gathered in the sitting-room. Though it was in June, the evening had fallen with a chill, which was due to a recent rain, and there was a fire in the grate. Old John Huntley lay back in his armchair and stared silently and thoughtfully into the glowing coals. His wife sat beside him; and on the floor at her feet sat Peter, who to her was a far greater person than a mere king.

"I wish you'd tell me, dad," Peter said suddenly, "exactly how Westover fleeced you. I'd like to know all about—the details, you know."

"I'd much rather not go over it, Peter," was the quick reply.

Almost immediately afterward, John Huntley made an excuse to leave the room. When the door had closed behind him, Mrs. Huntley bent forward and put a tender hand on Peter's dark-brown head.

"You touched a sore spot when you mentioned that, son," said she. "He can't bear to even think about it. And if I were not your mother, you probably wouldn't believe me when I tell you the reason: It's his great disappointment in humanity, Peter. He went to Westover a gentleman,

and he took it for granted that Farnsworth Alden and the others were gentlemen too. He trusted them too far.

"As to their methods of getting our money," she went on, "they induced him to build a number of dwelling-houses, a storehouse, and a factory, and they loaned him about half of the necessary money; then the Alden-Urhart bank failed very shrewdly, and the crash came. But your father's lack of business sense was partly to blame. He was a gentleman planter, and not a business man.

"The thing I tried hardest to forgive is this Peter: Alden and Judge Urhart—the judge, Peter, was in it too—found certain scoundrelly enemies of ours who were glad to swear in court that they wouldn't believe your father's oath; this was when he entered suit to try to regain something of that which we had lost."

It was fortunate for her peace of mind, perhaps, that she couldn't see her son's face when she had finished speaking. It was so white that it looked ghastly in the ruddy firelight. Judge Urhart had done that! His Marian's father had done that unspeakable thing!

Sitting there at his mother's knee, there at the first altar of life, big young Peter Huntley told himself firmly that those who had wronged his father must make all the amends possible. It had to be done for his father's sake, to restore his father's faith in humanity; there was not the tiniest scrap of cheap red vengeance connected with it.

For he knew that a man, no matter how good, who had lost his faith in his fellows was little better than dead.

ON THE following day, Peter Huntley went back to the Westover that he had both loved and hated. He meant to put his pride in irons, so to speak, and see Farnsworth Alden immediately, to ask for the position at the new power-plant; he would accept it at any salary. That would give him a reason for being in Westover; he could then work at the gigantic task of righting the wrong unsuspected, if it were necessary. He did not yet know how he was going to undertake that task, but he did know that he was going to undertake it.

Peter walked up the river to the dam. Four miles is no distance for such a man as Peter Huntley—who never smoked and never drank and who slept eight hours every night. The little journey required but an hour of his time.

Alden was not there when he arrived, and he began to look over the work. The dam was about three-fourths finished. The power-plant was all ready except for the setting up of the switchboards and the adjustment of the turbines and generators. And when Huntley had seen all there was to see, every nerve in him was tingling because of a most amazing discovery that he had made. That discovery was this:

The material of the dam contained less than half the percentage of cement it should have had to make it safe; the power-plant was cheaply erected; the machinery, turbines and generators and all, was second-hand and of old types and painted and polished to deceive inexperienced eyes.

Marian Urhart had acquainted him with the fact that a hundred thousand dollars of the people's money was going into the project; but it was not really costing much more than fifty thousand—the same ring that had robbed his father was now preparing to rake down at least forty thousand in graft!

"The fools!" said Huntley to himself, when the truth had fully dawned. "They've built this rotten sand dam above the town instead of below—and the first high water is sure to break it, and the town will be swept away!" Peter Huntley *knew*. He added—"I'd have thought Alden had better judgment than he's shown here, sure."

But Alden was essentially a builder of buildings, and not a builder of dams.

The contractor arrived in his six-cylinder runabout half an hour later. Instead of Huntley's finding him, he found Huntley. He was a big and pudgy, ruddy-faced man, and his countenance was peculiar in that it was both piggish and shrewd.

"What's your business here?" he wanted to know.

There was a hostile light in his pale gray eyes.

"I'm looking for an electrician's job," was the very prompt answer. "Judge Urhart suggested that I see you."

"Is your name Huntley?"

Alden, like most of the other Westoverites, had failed to recognize him.

"Peter Huntley. I can get fine letters of recommendation from two big Indiana corporations, and I'll take the place at a very reasonable figure. You see, Westover is my home town."

"You're too late," Farnsworth Alden said sourly. "I've got a man coming from Virginia. If you've no further business with me——"

He had lied. He had no man coming from Virginia, and the other knew it. Huntley went white with anger. Alden might have remembered that the big young man there before him had been a quick fighter all his life, but he didn't. With a burning insolence, he went on:

"You'd better be going. We've got nothing here for you."

They were standing on the river's bank, just below the new building. Huntley took a step forward and seized Alden's coat lapel.

"But I've got something for you, you —— grafter!" he growled. "And it's this: I'm going to tell the people of Westover of your graft scheme; I'm going to tell them all about this rotten dam that will be a constant menace to them, about the old and worn-out machinery, about everything; and I'm also going to wire the State's committee on public safety! You may hoodwink people who don't know anything about dams and power-plants, but you sure can't hoodwink the authorities—you lying, stealing, villainous grafter!"

Farnsworth Alden went guiltily purple.

"Graft scheme?" he throated. "Huntley, you're crazy!"

"Oh, am I?"

The younger man's smile was white and dangerous.

"I know something about graft schemes, crazy or not. The rest of the ring lets the contract to you for a hundred thousand; it costs you sixty, with a handsome profit in that for yourself; then you split the remaining forty with the rest of the ring. It's polite robbery, which is on a par with holy murder. Would you mind telling me just how much I missed it in my figures, Mr. Farnsworth Alden?"

If only he had thought of Marian, he would have been more careful. But he didn't think. Alden had called his hand, and he had been too intensely human to resist the temptation of showing that it was a big one.

Alden had by this time recovered his presence of mind.

"What do you know about machinery and dams?" he roared. He really believed the dam would hold in any water. "You scapegrace, I remember the reputation you used to have in Westover. Do you think I would put a man like you in charge of this plant? Not on your life! About the first thing we knew, you'd be entering suit against us, like your whining father——"

THAT was as far as he was permitted to go with it. Peter Huntley struck the sneering fat mouth so hard that he knocked out two teeth and splintered a bone in his hand. Alden reeled backward, and before he could fall Huntley had driven home another blow. This sent him into the river, which was shoulder-deep at that point. He came up puffing and sputtering. Huntley, blind with the pent-up anger of years, sprang to the water and hammered the pudgy, piggish face again.

But in all that he had been unwise. He had but let himself fall into a trap that the resourceful Alden had laid for him—but Alden, it is safe to say, hadn't dreamed that he would fall so quickly and so hard!

The grafting contractor had been cornered tight. He saw the State penitentiary looming gray ahead of him. The easiest way out of that corner was to goad Huntley to fight him, and then have Huntley tried and imprisoned on a charge of assault. A ring magistrate would do it.

Once in the Westover jail, the troublemaker would have no opportunity to communicate with the State authorities or alarm the populace. Within two weeks the dam would be finished and therefore proof against investigations, and the people would be too well pleased with their electrically-lighted town to pay any attention to a howler of calamity.

A score of workmen rushed to their employer's aid. They dragged him, gasping for breath, from the water. Huntley calmly waded out and began to look for his hat, which he had lost.

"Hold him!" thickly blustered Alden. "Hold that man—he's a lunatic—he must be arrested!"

Half a dozen men ran to Huntley and clapped their sand-plastered hands on his shoulders and arms.

"Keep off!" Peter ordered sharply, throwing them aside.

"Hold him, I say!" cried Alden.

At that the men, a round twelve of them this time, sprang determinedly upon Huntley. There was a lively struggle, but it lasted for less than a minute. One man, especially if he be handicapped by a shattered finger-bone, can not hope to hold his own long against a dozen sturdy laborers.

They tied Huntley's hands behind him, and one of them struck him brutally at the enraged contractor's command when he protested. Then they bound him hard and fast in Alden's runabout, and Alden whisked him to Westover and to Magistrate Gurland's office without arousing the notice of the people.

Immediately after a hastily whispered conference between Farnsworth Alden and the magistrate, Peter was given a semblance of a trial. There was small need of witnesses, Gurland said; the contractor's still bleeding face furnished all the evidence necessary. Huntley endeavored to present his side of the affair, but a deputy-sheriff promptly hushed him.

"Assault with intent to kill," droned the magistrate. "Eleven months and twenty-nine days."

The deputy started away with his prisoner. Alden bent toward Magistrate Gurland and whispered a reminder.

"In solitary confinement," added Gurland. "Watch him. He's dangerous."

Into the dingiest, most dismal cell of the Westover jail went well-dressed Peter Huntley, and the heavy lock clicked behind him. This cell was in the jail's basement, and the only light it had struggled in through a horizontally narrow, barred window set on a level with the ground outside and facing a blank stone fence.

The only furniture was a wooden box and a narrow and musty-smelling bed. On the whitewashed wall opposite the iron door some former occupant of that solitary cell had whimsically written with a piece of charcoal:

VISITORS MUST NOT FEED OR ANNOY THE ANIMALS

Began for Peter a series of days and nights that were full of that acute misery that any manner of confinement brings to live and red-blooded men. No privileges whatever were granted him save those of going three times a day, always under the close guard that is sent with the most untrustworthy criminals, to the lavatory and then to the eating-room.

He tried to buy the sheriff and the jailer, but *his money wouldn't touch* them. He tried to tell them about the dangerous dam—for Marian's sake he refrained from mentioning the graft scheme—but they had been warned in advance that his mind was twisted on such questions as those of power-plants and dams.

Peter grew sullen, and his face became darkened with a stubby beard and lean. But never for a moment did he give up his aims or lose hope, though it required in him the indomitable courage of a superman.

All along he had been wondering whether Marian knew of his incarceration. She would come to see him when she was able to be out, he was sure, if she had learned of his plight.

But Marian didn't know of it. The grafting ring had taken care that very very few knew of it. Peter had guessed too shrewdly in the figures he had presented to Alden just before the "assault."

Three weeks from the date on which the iron door swung shut between Huntley and liberty, the dam was completed and the high tension wires were connected with the distributing station. The streets and almost every house in Westover had been wired and made ready. The evening that saw the town flooded with electric light was a time of general rejoicing. The band played, speeches were made in the courthouse, the populace cheered wildly. Down in his dungeon-like cell Peter heard something of it dimly, and he understood.

A month passed, and during those four weeks the stores stopped handling kerosene and most of the people foolishly threw away their oil lamps and used the oil they had for building fires.

Also during that month, a scourging epidemic of typhoid struck the town.

There is nothing on earth, I think, quite so uncertain as Tennessee's weather. On the last day of July it began to rain hard and steadily. For hours upon hours it rained, and the river began to rise. Peter Huntley began to rave about the dam. It was enough, considering the wear of his solitary confinement, to drive him insane.

The jailer refused to listen. Peter then

tried to shout his warning through the little window. The jailer threatened to gag him if he didn't close his mouth of his own accord.

"All right," agreed Peter. "But first let me say this: if there is such a thing as reincarnation, you're the same damned scoundrel that stuck the spear into the side of the Man they crucified."

The keeper of the keys laughed and went off whistling. Peter began to pace the dank floor. He kept himself from thinking of being drowned there in his cell by thinking of his Marian. How he hoped that she would escape the devastating flood wall that he knew had to come!

Night fell thick. The street electrics made only dim white circles in the misty darkness. Two hours, and something failed at the power-plant—and Westover with its scores of cases of typhoid was plunged into impenetrable, Stygian blackness.

JUDGE URHART tried to sit up in the smothering night, and found that he was too weak. He lay back on his pillow, waited and listened impatiently. A few minutes later he heard his daughter's soft footsteps in the near-by hallway. She came slowly, groping, feeling her way with her hands.

"What did the engineer say?" he wanted to know.

"The telephone worked badly at first, and I didn't get it all," said Marian, halting beside his bed. "There's something wrong with—the generators, I believe he said. Maybe the lights will come on soon. I hope so, for this is terrible! I wish Peter Huntley were in charge up there, father. It's a shame that Mr. Alden wouldn't give him the position."

"I've already heard too much of Peter Huntley," weakly declared the mayor of Westover.

"If only we knew where to find him!" the girl continued. "Do you suppose his parents in Faidleysville would know? Did he—are you sure he didn't say where he was going when he left?"

"I—er, I don't believe he did."

The old ex-judge was too sick to lie outright very easily.

The night wore on, and the typhoid sufferers suffered on in the blackness. The coming of eleven o'clock found half the women in Westover hysterical. By midnight the hearts of some very strong men were being harassed by that unrelenting darkness.

Farnsworth Alden had been kept busy answering telephone calls for hours. Now he knew that something had to be done, and that done quickly, to get the generators to working again; the stricken town had to have light. He thought of asking Peter Huntley's aid, but he doubted seriously that Huntley would turn over a hand for him. In his dilemma, he decided to go to the resourceful Judge Urhart for advice.

Marian met him at the door.

"It's Alden," he said shakily. "I've got to talk with your father. Please take me to him—and let me hold to your arm, Marian; I stumble badly in this darkness."

He had been drinking in an attempt to settle his nerves.

"You mustn't worry him, remember," warned the girl.

She led him to her father's bedroom. When they were inside the door, Alden announced himself, then he requested that Marian leave him with her father for a few minutes.

Marian pretended to withdraw—and didn't.

"Well?" said Urhart, impatiently.

"Do you think *you* could get Huntley to go to the power-plant?" began Alden. "Maybe he could give us light. We've got to have light."

"After your treatment of him," Urhart said sourly, "he wouldn't go. This is a sort of unholy vengeance for him. You mustn't forget that he's been lying there in jail for some two months nursing a grievance."

"You sanctioned it," Alden replied half angrily. "You were as deep in the graft scheme as anybody else."

Marian's two hands clutched her dress at her throat. Peter in jail for two months! A graft scheme! In the twinkling of an eye, her intuition told her almost the whole story. She knew about the ruining of Peter's father; she might not have known just how it had been brought about, but, all the same, she knew.

"Mr. Alden," came her troubled voice from the doorway, "please stay here with father until the nurse wakes—she's worn out. Peter Huntley will go to the dam for me, I know."

Without waiting for a reply, without

waiting to ask her father's permission, she hastened for a wrap and went toward the garage, which stood just behind the house. Three minutes later she was at the wheel of the big touring-car and driving at a rapid rate toward Westover's jail. The glare of the headlights showed her that the rain had ceased.

At the jail she demanded entrance in her father's name. The jailer had found a candle; he opened the strong front door and held the flickering light above his head.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Marian! Is anything——"

She interrupted sharply:

"I'm going to take Peter Huntley to the dam to straighten out things there—release him, and hurry!"

She stepped inside the door to wait. The keeper of the keys telephoned to the Urhart residence, and after a considerable wait Farnsworth Alden answered. It would be all right, said Alden, to send Huntley to the power-plant, but a guard should accompany him.

The jailer hastened to the basement and unlocked the door of the solitary cell.

"Come out," he began; "they want you——"

He broke off short because the light of his candle showed him that the prisoner was gone! Huntley's bed, he noted, had been demolished; then he saw: Huntley had used one of its strong railings as a means of prying out two of the narrow window's rusted bars.

Marian was not disappointed when she heard of it. Rather, she was pleased.

"He's gone to the dam," she declared.

"I'd bet all I've got that he hasn't," replied the jailer.

Marian ignored that. "There's a good road all the way up there; I'm going up to see if I can help him in any way—please phone Mr. Alden, and ask him to tell father."

With that she almost ran from the jail, and soon she was driving at a twenty-mile clip along the smooth pike that led up the river.

The plant was lighted when she caught sight of it. But that came from storage batteries, of course. She drew up beside the road, sprang from the machine and hurried across the few rods that lay between it and the big brick building.

ON THE main floor she found Peter Huntley working like mad over one of the old generators. He was grimy, and his clothing was soiled and untidy, and his face was thin and almost black with beard; except for the fine, brave glow in his eyes, he had the appearance of a tramp. Marian suppressed a sob of pity when she saw him.

For a long half-hour she stood there and watched him while he wrestled with disconnected field wires and worn-out bearings. He was too intent upon his task to see anything else. Finally he finished the work, and then he gave a signal to the sawmill engineer who called himself an electrical engineer because he had taken a short correspondence course in electricity.

"Ready, Wildman!" he said.

The sallow little man put the big machine in motion, and a steady humming sound came from it. Then he ran to the breaker and threw the current on—and the stricken town below had light!

"Peter!" cried Marian.

Huntley looked around and saw her. She was radiant with perfect health again, prouder than ever of him, heart-broken with sympathy for him. He went toward her with a happy light on his bearded face; then he stopped because he felt himself unfit to touch her. She understood; she took one of his grimy hands, and pressed it to her breast.

"Poor old Peter!" she sobbed. "I—I didn't know. They told me you had gone. Then father sent me to a mountain resort to recuperate. I'm so very sorry, Peter!"

"Listen, Marian," said Huntley, his voice grave and hollow. "The river has been three feet higher than it is now, and the dam held; but the river is now rising again, from heavy rains on its headwaters, and if it gets higher than it was before I believe the dam will break. Let me look at the gage again——"

He turned and ran. A minute later he was back, and he was excited.

"It's almost as high as it was before!" he told her. "I want you to tell that fool town down there about it. They wouldn't believe me. Telephone—tell central to warn the people to take their sick ones and get clean out of the valley! And have central instruct them to leave all lights on, and when the dam breaks we'll flash the lights three times as a warning. That will

give the foolish ones some twenty minutes to get to safety. In there—" he stretched a finger unsteadily toward the plant's little office—"is a phone."

Marian transferred his message almost verbatim. Half an hour later every soul in Westover had received the warning. The typhoid sufferers were wrapped in blankets and carefully carried to houses that stood high and above the danger-line. Those who were incredulous enough to remain in their threatened homes were not, fortunately, incredulous enough to put out their lights. Neither did they go to sleep.

The sawmill engineer stood at his post before the current-breaker, ready to flash the signal in Westover. Huntley stood at an open window that faced the dam; and beside him was Marian, with her gaze upon the muddy, foam-dotted and débris-covered waters below. She had wanted to return to her father, but Huntley wouldn't permit it; the road to Westover lay in the valley all the way down, and it was too hazardous.

"Peter," she murmured, when she had wrung from him a confirmation of her suspicions and knew everything, "Peter, I hope the dam will break, almost."

"Marian!"

"Almost, I said. For then you will have whipped your home town, which ruined your gentleman father and called you a villain when you fought for your rights, the town you both love and hate. The engineer isn't looking; if you can take your eyes off that dam for a second, you may kiss me, Peter, dear."

He did it. Just then the droning *miserere* of the mad waters widened into a far-reaching, gushing roar, and with it came the grinding jar of stone upon stone.

Peter whirled.

"Break the current!" he bellowed. "Break it! Once—twice—again—good, Wildman!"

With the knowledge that he had succeeded in saving the little city he was to hate no longer, reactionary weakness overpowered him, and he sank to the floor. The solitary cell had taken its toll at last.

They hurried him to his father's home in Faidleysville, and the people of a whole county hung upon tidings concerning his condition as though it were a matter of life or death to them. Peter got well soon.

Save for a thorough wetting, Westover was not very badly damaged by the flood. The waters had spread and thereby lost much of their force by the time they had gone the four miles, and only a few houses were swept from their foundations. Fortunately, those buildings directly in the path of the current were of brick or stone.

WHEN the cleaning-up was over and the people were pretty close to happiness again, Westover's mayor called a meeting of certain men in the library of his home. When they were all there, Judge Urhart rose beside his littered desk and addressed them with a peculiar glint in his eyes.

"Gentlemen," he began, "we are here tonight to organize the Business Men's League of Westover. The league is going to begin its business by doing these things:

"First, it's going to pay old John Huntley back all he lost to us. Second, it's going to build a hundred thousand dollars' worth of dam and power-plant on the river below the city—and the job is going to be put into the hands of Peter Huntley, the man to whom Westover owes its life. Third, it's going to stand behind all the bigger damage done by the flood."

He spoke with an air of finality. He was still the Big Boss. And yet, there was one man of those present who dared to criticize him. That man was Farnsworth Alden.

"I have just read," he sneered, "the wedding announcement."

Judge Urhart went white and stared hard.

"That has nothing whatever to do with it. It's gratitude, you hog. Peter Huntley whipped me, Farnsworth, a little harder than he whipped you, only he did it in a different way. If you refuse to do your part by this *amende honorable*, by ——, sir, you'll go to prison! I may have to go with you; but, take my word for it, you'll go! I am waiting for your decision right now, sir."

"Oh, I—I'll not refuse," replied Alden.

Whereupon Judge Urhart took his right hand from his right hip-pocket.

Two Strong Men *A complete novelette*

by Farnham Bishop and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

Authors of "Malena," "With Sharp Sword-Edges," etc.

CROWDED with warriors in the fantastic armor of medieval Japan, a long line of junks and sampans rounded the southwest tip of the Korean peninsula, and headed north along the deserted coast of that war-tortured country, so inappropriately called the "Land of the Morning Calm." Sent forth upon the seas by the edict of Hideyoshi, the Cæsar of Japan—who, like his Roman prototype, was uncrowned king of a conquering empire—they bore eager reenforcements to the hundred and ninety thousand veterans who were crashing through the rotten framework of the Korean kingdom as a stone crashes through a paper lantern.

Hideyoshi's land campaigns were drawing to a triumphant close; there remained only to debark these reeinforcements for Konishi's army, which was holding the new-captured city of Pyeng-yang. It was the Summer of 1592; before Autumn, Hideyoshi would have the peninsula safe behind him, as a base and source of supplies for his intended conquest of China.

Kurushima, Daimio or Lord of Tosa, led the fleet with a picked squadron manned by his own hardy fishermen—veteran sea-fighters, every man. Their long, rakish craft, mere open rowboats though they were, were known and feared from Luzon to the China coast. The largest foe that sailed the seas shrank from encountering them; pulling alongside, they would board and carry all before them with the trenchant edges of their terrible swords.

Once at Pyeng-yang, they would land and join in the dash on Nanking, with which the conquest of China was to begin. Kurushima's stern soul yearned for the wind to bear them thither, where there waited adventuring enough even for his ardent spirit. There would be huge armies to overthrow, great cities to storm, the vastest kingdom in the world to seize and rule. As for the Koreans—they were to him as the crushed oyster-shells that paved the road to his castle-gate. He was composing a verse on this thought, when a startled cry from the helmsman wiped it from his mind. His alert eyes focused on the sea ahead.

From behind the lee of Han-San Island shot such a thing as the world had never yet seen. It was manifestly a ship—but what a ship! The Japanese stared as at some incredible monster. She was covered with an iron roof; a curved deck of iron plates shaped like the back of a tortoise. There was neither sail nor mast; beneath the protecting overhang of the iron deck the oars of many rowers urged her forward at stupefying speed. A hideous dragon's head, with wide-open jaws, glared horribly above the bows. A raised oar in the stern bore the flaming standard of Admiral

Yi Sun-sin, the great sea-fighter and inventor of Korea.

As the Japanese gazed with open eyes and mouths, the dragon's jaws spat smoke and flame, and a heavy cannon-ball tore through the crowded waist of one of Kurushima's junks. The shrieks of the wounded rang piteously; but through and above them beat a thunderous yell of defiance from the whole Japanese fleet. Tall, narrow banners, bright with the insignia of a hundred fighting feudal chiefs, were waved on high. From junks and sampans swords, spears and halberds glistened in the sun. The archers of Japan bent their seven-foot bows, and a storm of burning fire-arrows flew through the air.

But the thick shafts flew in vain, for they only rebounded from the tortoise-boat's iron deck, and fell hissing into the sea. Matchlock-men fired their shot, but the balls glanced from the Korean's iron plates with a sound like that of hail-stones on a metal roof.

"If we, too, had cannon—" cried Kurushima's helmsman; but the Daimio cut him short.

"Why should we use the weapons of cowards?" he exclaimed. "We have not needed them on the land, why on the sea? 'The sword is the soul of the Samurai.' "

It was his favorite proverb; and now he and his men, in open boats, were ready to put their trust in the sword, even against an ironclad.

By this time the monster was right among them. Besides the dragon-mouth forward, there were six similar embrasures on each side, and another aft. Burning to come to hand-grips, the Japanese pressed up in their swarming open boats, striving to close and board. But one after another, they were shattered by crashing broadsides. Between broadsides, while the Korean gun-crews rammed home fresh charges, the bowmen beside them shot fire-arrows into the crowded vessels of Japan. The wooden hulls caught fire easily, and several were soon ablaze.

An abortive cheer rang out as one daring sampan, carrying a company of eager men-at-arms, pulled squarely athwart the tortoise-boat's bows. But the cheer died as the Korean's long, sharp ram cut her in two as if the sampan had been a straw, spilling her swordsmen into the sea. With unchecked speed, the ironclad passed over the swirl where her brave enemy had been, brained the struggling swimmers with her swinging oars, and rammed the largest junk in the Japanese fleet. Her side crushed in at the water-line, the junk heeled over, filled and went down with all on board, as the tortoise-boat backed away and started for a fresh victim.

Through the length of the entire fleet the ironclad tore her way, mangling helpless sampans with her terrible beak, sinking great junks with the fearful balls from her well-directed cannon. With frantic courage, the Japanese bore in, hoping against hope for a chance to board and avenge their butchered comrades. But all was in vain. The tortoise forced a path through them all, and sped on toward the south, as if sated with destruction.

Undaunted, her surviving enemies put about, doubling on their former course, and hastened to pursue their now fleeing foe. Soon the Japanese squadron was strung out in a long, scattering line ahead, as the speedier of them outdistanced their laboring fellows. But not even the swiftest held its own with the tortoise-boat, whose well-modeled racing hull beneath the overhanging gun-deck gave the lie to her name. On they pressed, pursuers and pursued, oars churning the water white; till the Japanese line was punctured with great gaps.

Suddenly the ironclad's speed slackened, her oars trailed idly. With loud shouts of "*Banzai!*" the leading Japanese bore down upon her. When barely two ship's lengths separated them, the Korean oars struck the water again; but with a difference. Admiral Yi Sun-sin had built his vessel alike at both ends; he had ordered his rowers to face about, and what had been the stern of the tortoise-boat was now her bow. Hardly had his nonplused pursuers realized the maneuver, when the ironclad, tearing toward them with growing speed, rammed and sank the foremost sampan, and came back down the line of her widely scattered adversaries, striking, backing and striking again.

It was too much. Crying that this sea-monster was the work of gods or demons, but not of men, the crews of several ships hurled their useless weapons into the sea. Some, fleeing swiftly, were fortunate enough to reach the shore, where they beached and set fire to their vessels to save them from

the victorious Koreans. But most of them were slain, fighting or fleeing, so that the chroniclers of that day have declared the sea was red with their blood.

But Kurushima did not flee. Inwardly raging, but steady and skilful as in victory, he took upon himself the honor of Japan. Handling his own long, open boat smartly, he offered his broadside to the enemy's ram, swung 'round as it came on, and brought her right under the overhang of the ironclad's starboard beam. With a joyous yell, the men of Tosa swarmed up on the turtle's back, lusting to flesh their heavy swords. But their fierce cries soon changed to shrieks of agony, for the curved iron deck was studded thickly with sharp spikes and spear-heads, on which the helpless boarders were impaled.

Kurushima alone was luckier. Leaping up at an open port, he succeeded in grasping one of the great gilded fangs in the lower jaw of the dragon's mouth before his own boat was left behind. Pulling himself up with his left hand, he took the sword from between his teeth and delivered a mighty overhand blow at a dimly seen form inside the port. He had the joy of feeling his blade shear through flesh and bone and seeing it come back dripping. Then the reloaded gun was run out through the port; the lower lip of its muzzle struck the Daimio squarely on his helmeted forehead and knocked him senseless into the sea.

KURUSHIMA'S eyelids fluttered twice, and opened wide. He felt weak and faint. His fingers found the sleeping-mat on which he lay; his eyes saw, but did not comprehend the pine-tree which sheltered him, and the six-foot fence of canvas raised about the tree on spears thrust upright into the ground. For a time his brain did not grasp the meaning of these things; then, memory and understanding dawning in his mind, he ground his teeth in humiliated pride.

The savage, hopeless battle against the tortoise-boat; the crunch of the monster's ram against the ribs of his doomed ships; the overwhelming defeat; his own desperate, futile attempt to snatch victory from the teeth of destruction, and the crashing blow that had flung him into oblivion—all came back upon him now, with accumulated bitterness. Japan had relied upon him, and he had failed her! Now he lay here, rescued he knew not how, cared for by folk he had not seen, but alive, alive, when he should have died with his brave sailors!

There was only one course for a beaten soldier, a dishonored Samurai. With hands that would scarcely obey the command of his brain, he fumbled for his dagger, fixed in the resolution to commit *hari-kari*, that he might not live continually reproaching himself for the stain of his defeat.

But at the sound of his first feeble stirring, a little man in a gray kimono stepped from behind the pine. He was short, this man, even for a Japanese; barely five feet tall, and as slightly built as a child. His face was that of an incredibly old and wrinkled monkey; but the eyes which burned in it were those of a god. Whoso met their glance knew himself in the presence of his master. Kurushima started violently, and turned his face away. It was Hideyoshi himself, the all-conquering dictator of Japan.

Reading the Daimio's intention, as he was wont to read the minds of men, Hideyoshi raised two fingers in a gesture of restraint.

"You shall not slay yourself, Kurushima," he commanded. "You are to kill the crew of the tortoise-boat instead, and sink their iron monster in the sea."

"But how?" gasped the astonished Kurushima. "How can I do this, when I have already failed?"

"By returning to your province of Tosa and playing *go* in your castle at Urado," Hideyoshi replied enigmatically, and sat on the floor beside the sleeping-mat. "Do not try to rise, for the fever has scarce left you. It is a fortnight since you were brought here. One of your sailors kept you afloat in spite of all your armor, and drew you to a piece of floating wreckage, whence you were taken into the ship of Miyosi of Izumo. That is how you were saved, and this is how you may serve Japan:

"We must have a great, strong ship, carrying heavy guns, to sink the tortoise-boat; otherwise the war can not go forward. We build no such vessels of our own. I have tried to buy two from the Portuguese in Macao, but they will not sell. Only one other source remains.

"Every year, at this time or a little later, a huge ship like a castle in the sea sails northward past the coast of Tosa. This

ship comes from Manila, richly laden, and goes to another Spanish city called Acapulco. The Spaniards in Manila have many such vessels; but their king, fearing lest they grow too rich, lets them send only one a year. Five years ago a tempest drove one of those Spanish ships into your port of Urado."

Kurushima nodded, his despair forgotten in eager attention.

"She tarried for a week," he affirmed, "filling her water-casks and waiting for the wind to moderate, for it was a very great storm."

"This year's ship," said Hideyoshi, tapping his finger-tips together to emphasize his words, "will come to Urado, whether there is a storm or not."

Kurushima was too polite to look incredulous; but the dictator sensed his doubts and thought it best to dispel them.

"There are many Japanese in Manila, and they tell me much," Hideyoshi explained graciously. "One of them, a Christian named Ichio, sails with this year's ship. Her course from Manila lies through many islands, where the Christian priests and their converts wait for her coming and row out to her, bearing gifts of fresh meat and fruit. To certain ones of these converts on the nearer islands I have already sent orders which they will repeat to Ichio when the ship arrives.

"Now Ichio is keeper of the water-casks aboard her. Off the coast of Tosa he will report, quite truthfully, to his captain that the casks are leaky and nearly empty, and he will praise the spring that flows under the wisterias above your beach. The ship's captain will have no choice but to put into Urado, if he would keep his crew from perishing of thirst.

"Then you must get possession of the ship. If possible, do so without violence; for I do not wish to begin another war till this one is finished. If you give the Spaniards a fair opportunity, they may give up without a struggle. The Spaniards in Manila are few and fear us greatly; they are merchants, loving gain and hating to fight. Probably you can bribe the captain to sell the ship; Ichio has been told to study his weaknesses and report them to you.

"Remember, if it comes to fighting, that the ship is to be captured, so far as possible, without injury. Her crew are of no importance, except the sailing-master and the gunners. These you will try to take alive.

"The hulls of these Manila ships are of teak, thick enough to withstand stone or iron shot from the heaviest cannon in all Japan or Korea. That is why I wish for one to fight the tortoise-boat. If you succeed, you shall take the great ship into battle for the conquest of China. Nevertheless, stout as she is, I forbid you to use either cannon or fire-arrows when you capture her, lest mischance occur."

"We of Tosa despise such cowards' tools," Kurushima answered scornfully. "The brave man knows no weapon but the sword."

With a smile that beautified his wrinkled face, Hideyoshi reached within the folds of his kimono, and handed to Kurushima the Daimio's own beloved blade. At the familiar feel of the sharkskin grip, tears burst from Kurushima's eyes, and a great flood of health and strength poured through his fever-wasted veins.

"Even the Sea-God failed to wrest it from your grasp," said the dictator. "May you die with it in your hand!"

"WHAT manner of man, then, is this captain of yours?" demanded Kurushima crisply.

Through a loophole in the wall of his castle he could see the great Manila galleon *San Gregorio* riding at anchor in Urado Bay. The flaming banner of Spain flew from her lofty poop, and beneath it sparkled the blue gleam of Western armor.

Ichio, the mask-faced secret agent of Hideyoshi, looked at the fighting eye and panther-like body of the Daimio—now fully recovered from the effects of his fever—and replied—

"Oh Lord of Tosa, he is even such a man as yourself!"

"What, Christian dog!" cried the angry Daimio, his eyes flashing terribly. "Do you compare this barbarian, this sea-merchant, with one of the honorable class of Samurai?"

"Forgive my heedless tongue, most mighty lord!" wailed Ichio, his forehead scraping the matting and the back of his neck tickling with apprehension. "I mean that he is no merchant, but a warrior—a *caballero*, which is to say, a Samurai of

Spain. Born of the most ancient and impoverished house of de Torres, my captain, Don Diego, thinks never of gain, but always of honor. The Spaniards in his crew boast of the many battles he has fought with the English, the Moros and other pirates. So great is his skill and valor that he has never lost a ship entrusted to his care. And so wonderful is his honesty that, though he has had charge of whole cargoes of silver and gold, he is still poor."

"There can be no question, then, of bribing such a man," said Kurushima, with much satisfaction.

The idea had been utterly repugnant to his straightforward, hard-hitting nature; but Hideyoshi's commands had been explicit. Now, however, the Daimio could go ahead after his own methods, with his conscience free.

Obedient to the dictator's will, he had proceeded with the utmost caution. No sooner had the *San Gregorio* entered Urado harbor, early that morning, than he had seen to it that certain effective but unobtrusive methods had been taken to bar her exit. Moreover, out from the mist-shrouded shore had darted a dozen challenging guard-boats, crammed with picked swordsmen, ostensibly to demand the reason for the stranger's intrusion. Had there been evidence of panic or unpreparedness on board the galleon, she would have been boarded and captured then and there.

But a culverin had roared from a lower-deck port, and an eighteen-pound solid shot struck the water so close to the bows of the leading guard-boat that the column of spray it raised fell on and drenched the startled rowers as they instinctively backed water. So there was a halt and a parley, in which Ichio served as interpreter. And when, as a result of that parley, the guard-boats withdrew and some of the galleon's crew rowed ashore as the sun drank up the mist, to begin the all-day task of filling the water-casks, Ichio came with them and presently slipped away to the castle to make his report to the Daimio.

"It is true that Don Diego can not be bought with gold," he said regretfully. "But he has one weakness: he is in love.

"On the last voyage from Acapulco to Manila, we had as passenger the Lady Ysabel, daughter of the Governor of the Philippines. Never, oh Lord of Tosa, have I seen so beautiful a maiden. All on board worshiped her—the very Lascars made verses in her praise, which the lookout sang as he walked in the bows at night. And from the high poop, Don Diego and the Lady Ysabel would look down together at the moonlight on the sea. Long before we reached Manila, we knew, from the way those two looked at each other, that they were in love."

"What have this captain's private affairs to do with me?" Kurushima inquired.

"This: there is in them a means for getting this ship into your hands, Most Mighty One."

"Go on then," the Daimio commanded.

"When we reached Manila," the spy continued, "we found no fleet of trading-junks from China, as there should have been, with silks and porcelains for the galleon's return voyage to Acapulco. The fierce Moro pirates from Sulu had frightened them all away. Great was the clamor of the Manila merchants to the governor, who talked loudly but did nothing. It was a great calamity to all in Manila, for in the China trade lies all their wealth, and they live but for the fat profits from the sale of those goods in Acapulco.

"As soon as we had discharged our lading of Spanish goods and Mexican silver, Don Diego went to the governor and offered to sail the *San Gregorio* into the Sulu Sea, destroy the pirates, and re-open the China trade. This was a voluntary service on his part, for he is not an officer of the governor of the Philippines, but of the viceroy of Mexico. Overjoyed, the governor bade him name his own reward; and Don Diego asked for the hand of the Lady Ysabel. This was overheard by one of my comrades, a servant in the Palacio. Nothing is said or done in Manila that we servants of Japan do not know.

"Now there was in Manila a cunning rogue who called himself Don Feliz de Arruego, and who had grown rich by secret speculation in *billetes*. These *billetes* are pieces of paper, each entitling its bearer to ship the fourth part of a bale on the yearly galleon. They are distributed among the merchants of Manila, according to the wealth and standing of the merchant, and their value fluctuates greatly."

"What do I know or care of merchants and their papers?" interrupted the impatient Kurushima. "What has this to do with capturing a ship?"

"Patience, oh Mighty One, and I will make all clear. "If anything occurs to prevent the yearly shipment to Acapulco, the *billetes* decline greatly in value, and the merchants face ruin. One day a fisherman, employed by this Feliz de Arruego, came to Manila with a most terrible tale. Blown by contrary winds into the Sulu Sea, he had there, so he declared, seen the *San Gregorio* grappled by a whole fleet of *proas*, and the fierce Moros swarming up her sides by hundreds. Then, so the fisherman swore, the galleon's powder-magazine exploded, and she was blown to pieces with all on board.

"At this fearful news, all Manila was plunged into the deepest despair. There would be no shipment; the *billetes* were worthless; it was a terrible blow to the island trade.

"Deepest of all was the grief of the Lady Ysabel, many were her tears, and many the masses she had said for the repose of her lover's soul.

"Then came another suitor for her hand: Don Feliz de Arruego. Going to the governor, he revealed the truth, which was that Don Diego was alive and returning victorious in the *San Gregorio*, with the heads of three pirate *dattos* hanging from the bowsprit, and a rich Chinese trading fleet astern. The governor cursed himself because, like all others in Manila, he had sold all his *billetes* when the false news had made them worthless.

Don Feliz assured him that there was none who had not done the same, and revealed himself as the purchaser. Therefore he was now the sole owner of the cargo-space in this year's galleon, and was in consequence made fabulously rich by his own knavery and the valiant exploits of his rival. In consideration of his wealth, he asked the governor to let him marry the Lady Ysabel."

"And did not the governor instantly order him to be crucified?" demanded the virtuously indignant Kurushima.

"No, for Don Feliz offered him a half-share in the profits. It was that or poverty for the governor, who had received by the *San Gregorio* unexpected orders to return at once to Spain. And, because he had been so eager to fight the pirates, Don Diego had not tarried for a formal, public betrothal to the Lady Ysabel, without which he had no guarantee of her father's good faith. When he came back triumphant to Manila, he found her betrothed to Don Feliz de Arruego.

"And now, oh Lord of Tosa, they are all—Don Diego, the governor, Don Feliz, and the Lady Ysabel—returning to Acapulco in the *San Gregorio* out there in your harbor."

"Then why," exclaimed the Daimio, "when he has them all on his ship, does not this wronged and valiant captain cut the two knaves' heads off and marry the maiden?"

"Doubtless he would do so if there were any place where he could go afterward; but there is not, for he could not return home, and he is too honorable a man to turn pirate. But if he were offered high rank in your service with his ship, oh Ruler of the Southern Sea, why should he not slay his enemies, and accept?"

"YOU do well to take precautions, Captain. Hidden among those houses are troops to the strength of half a *tercia*."

So spoke pedantic little Lieutenant Pablo Gomez, as he stood on the quarter-deck of the *San Gregorio* and studied the beautiful, mountain-girt shores of Urado Bay without a suspicion of their beauty. He was in command of the handful of time-expired infantrymen returning to Spain on the galleon; and his eye was that of a trained soldier—and nothing else.

But the tall man beside him was not looking at the land; his eyes were fixed on five small fishing-junks, moored close together in the fairway, just inside the entrance of the harbor.

"I am more concerned, Don Pablo, with those fishermen yonder. They have caught nothing all day, yet they remain in the same spot."

"Why should those wretched smacks concern you more than a host of heathen soldiery?" asked Lieutenant Gomez, in wonder.

"It would be hard to make you understand why, Don Pablo," replied Diego de Torres, smiling. "You are a soldier and I am a seaman."

He was that rarest of sixteenth century types, a Spanish naval officer who knew and loved the sea. Born in a crumbling, spray-drenched castle on the craggy headland where for five centuries his ancestors

had looked out over the Bay of Biscay, Don Diego had literally learned the taste of salt water in his cradle. The children of fishermen and smugglers had been his playmates; and later, his teachers had been the buccaneers of Holland, France and England, in the grim schools of the North Sea and the Caribbean.

Young as he was, he had commanded a ship in the Great Armada of 1588, and had been one of the few commanders to bring his vessel safely back to Spain. He had served with high distinction in the galleons of the Indian Guard before the viceroy of Mexico sent him to the Southern Seas.

Yet, in spite of his plebeian knowledge of sheets and braces, cross-staffs and astrolabes, no one could deny that Don Diego de Torres looked and bore himself like the *caballero* he was. His slender, shapely figure, in its perfectly fitting sheath of black and silver, was as straight and supple as the long rapier by his side, and as finely tempered. His handsome, delicately-featured face would have seemed that of an ineffectual dreamer to one who failed to notice the strong chin beneath the short, pointed beard, or who had never seen the light of battle glow in those dark, melancholy eyes.

Up the poop-ladder from the waist came a young girl, astonishingly beautiful. She was a Spanish blonde, blue-eyed and fair as any Englishwoman, but with all the grace and fire of the South. Perched on her wrist sat a small, gay-feathered Borneo parrot, which her father, the ex-governor, had bought for her on the assurance that it could "play tricks and talk like a Christian."

"Has it spoken yet, Doña Ysabel?" asked Lieutenant Gomez, as he did at least ten times daily.

"Not yet, Don Pablo."

A suspicious gleam of polished metal in one of the temple groves ashore caught the watchful lieutenant's eye. The tide was ebbing, and the galleon lay head on to shore; Don Pablo bowed and went forward for a closer view.

For the first time since the galleon had cleared from Manila, Diego and Ysabel were alone together. Though he had longed to speak with her, to be near her, the *caballero's* rigid sense of honor had forced him to maintain a formal distance between himself and the betrothed of another man. Burning with resentment at the trick that Don Feliz had played upon him, his heart tortured with hopeless love, he was man and gentleman enough to play the game as he understood it, cost him what it might. But now he was face to face with Ysabel herself; the blood throbbed in his temples, his stern face and tense lips showed the strain under which his self-control was laboring. Ysabel watched him with anxious, tender eyes.

Suddenly, before either of them could utter a word, a strange shrill voice spoke from the empty air between them.

"Diego!" it cried, softly and plaintively, as if its heart were breaking. "Diego of my soul, come back to me!"

"It is the bird," said Diego, his voice under control, but his cheeks white beneath the sunburn. "It is the bird—I have heard the like in the West Indies."

Ysabel trembled and caught at the poop rail for support. The parrot, shaken from her wrist, flew to the top of one of the great, heavily leaded stern lanterns, whence it cried again—

"Diego of my soul, come back to me!"

Through the open cabin skylight came the clink of glasses and a snatch of a drinking-song in a high-pitched, unpleasant voice—the voice of that successful speculator in *billetes*, Don Feliz de Arruego.

"No!" said Ysabel, her voice on edge with loathing, her features firm and resolved. "No! I will not go back to Spain and marry that beast down there!"

Diego's heart leaped with a hope that he dared not acknowledge.

"You must not say this," he cautioned her. "It can do no good."

He knew that her greedy-souled father would hold her to the bargain, as by Spanish law he had every right to do. And he knew that the parrot was repeating what it had heard her cry out, over and over again in the night watches, innocent as she was of the terrible imitativeness of parrots. Henceforth the bird would cry it out all over the ship—and the voyage to Acapulco was five months long!

The cold sweat was standing out on Diego's forehead. But Ysabel was smiling, radiant with happiness.

"Listen, Diego!" she cried softly, so that those in the cabin might not hear. "Listen! I have found a way!"

"No, no," he protested. "I can not listen—you can not, in honor—oh, what can I say to make you understand? We must not think of that which has been—you are his betrothed!"

"His betrothed!" she breathed scornfully, her eyes twin points of blue flame. "His purchase, together with the bales of spices in the hold! Let him keep ship and merchandise—you and I will go ashore in this strange land and live there forevermore!"

"Ysabel! You would stay in Japan, a hostile and a heathen land! You would spend your life among barbarians to be with me?"

"But there are thousands of Christians in Japan, so Ichio of the water-casks has told me," the girl replied; "and good priests from Portugal, who—" her voice sank to a whisper, but she finished bravely, with crimson cheeks—"who would marry us, Diego."

Her lovely eyes looked up into his, her face was very near. Here, on this same corner of the poop where they now stood, he had first spoken to her, one moonlit night in mid-Pacific, of his great love. That love had filled his heart ever since, mastering him with its sweet madness, torturing him with its hopelessness, and now he felt it rise within him in a great, glad flood that swept away all doubts, all scruples.

Why should he give her up? She was his, his in spite of the vile trickster who had stolen her from him, but who had not won her heart. She loved him, Diego, loved him enough to give up home, friends, riches and live in exile, so she might only live with him! And why not? Why should they not land on that beautiful shore before him, and there live happily as long as life was theirs? He bent toward her, beside himself with her beauty, and stretched out his arms to take her to him.

But before he could put his thought into word or action, a loud challenging hail rang out from the forecastle:

"Boat ahoy! Keep off or we fire!"

Diego's arms dropped to his side; the madness swept from his brain by the urgency of duty, he turned to look out over the rail. A gorgeously painted barge, crowded with Japanese officials in strange ceremonial costumes, had put out from the shore and was approaching the anchored galleon.

"But it is the honorable ambassadors of the Lord Kurushima," came the reply in Spanish and in the familiar voice of Ichio, "with a most weighty message to the valiant Captain Don Diego de Torres."

"Bid the ambassadors come aboard," Diego replied shortly.

His half-hostile reception when he entered the harbor, the massing of troops on shore, and the semi-piratical reputation of the Tosa coast, had caused him to stand on his guard and keep off all shore craft at a safe distance. He had wanted nothing better than to be left alone till he could complete the tedious task of refilling the water-casks and put out to sea.

But a formal embassy demanded formal and proper reception—even if he were not now thinking of making a welcome in Japan for himself and Ysabel.

"Lower away the starboard gangway, smartly, there!" Diego commanded. "Boatswain, lay aft with your sideboys, drummers and trumpeters. Lieutenant Gomez, your musketeers and pikemen will form a guard of honor. Have them present arms as the ambassadors come overside."

Loud boomed the saluting guns; the trumpets sounded, the drummers beat a ruffle and the boatswain piped the ambassadors aboard. There were bows and greetings on both sides; the ambassadors, all men well past middle life, with gorgeously embroidered silk kimonos and oiled black top-knots, almost swept the decks with their foreheads; and the courteous Spaniards drew off their plumed caps with a stately flourish and a crooking of velvet knees.

Beautiful gifts of curiously carved ivory were brought forward by the ambassadors; boxes of perfumed sandalwood, inlaid bronze-lacquer caskets, and rich pieces of raw silk, were presented in token of the friendly esteem of the Daimio. In acknowledgment, Diego had his servants bring out food, and tall glasses of Spanish wine, of which his guests partook sparingly. He offered no gifts in return, for he knew that would have offended the ambassadors.

Ichio, *maestro de los raciones de agua*, proved himself also a master of the language and etiquette of both nations. After an hour's hard work, he reached the point where he could deliver the Daimio's urgent invitation to Captain Diego de Torres to visit him in his castle, and advise him how to combat the terrible tortoise-boat.

Diego's somber eyes lit up with interest. Here was the very opening he was looking for; moreover, the description of the strange Korean warship which had inflicted disaster upon the fleet of Japan aroused his professional interest. So Diego went ashore with the highly pleased and very deferential ambassadors. By his own orders, none of his countrymen went with him; he wanted no witnesses to that which might occur.

KURUSHIMA'S castle proved to be a huge rectangular enclosure of gray stone, hardly more than a crenelated wall twelve feet high, sloping outward in a massive escarpment, and provided with wide, strong gates and a moat. Passing through the south gate with his escort, between two fantastically-armored sentinels in black war-masks, Diego was ushered in between bowing functionaries, and discovered himself in a court containing half-a-dozen picturesque wooden buildings, richly finished and grotesquely carved. His guides led the way into the largest of these, and departed.

A powerfully built man with commanding eyes rose from a padded mat at the further end of the hall, and approached him, bowing low. Though no word was said, Diego recognized that he was in the presence of the Daimio, so obviously was this Japanese the master of the place. Ichio, entering behind his captain, confirmed his impression by prostrating himself with marked humility. Diego looked his host over with frank, though courteous curiosity. Kurushima was still young, plainly an athlete and a soldier. His gaze was lion-like and frank, his gestures those of a born leader of men.

After tea had been brought in and served, with much ceremony, in handleless cups of gay Chinese porcelain, the Daimio began to talk easily and fluently, Ichio translating with a mounting air of importance. Diego listened intently, without comment. As calmly as if he had been discussing an event of ancient history, Kurushima told the tale of the tortoise-boat, describing his own defeat in vivid, concise terms.

"And this is the ship," he concluded at length, drawing a roll of stiffened silk from one capacious sleeve.

Seated upon a chest—the nearest approach to a chair in all Urado—Don Diego received the roll, unfolded it and gazed with great interest at a spirited painting of the tortoise-boat, drawn by Kurushima from memory. The Daimio was an artist of no mean ability, and had reproduced every detail of the monstrous craft with wonderful accuracy.

"A new type—a galley with broadside guns as well as bow-chasers!" exclaimed the Spaniard. "In that point it resembles the galleasses of Don John of Austria at Lepanto—but those were no true galleys, for they were ship-rigged as well as oared. I should like to see a squadron of these tortoise-boats built for the Mediterranean service, and sent against the rovers of the Barbary Coast."

"This curved deck, Don Diego, is covered with plates of iron," explained Ichio. "The Lord Kurushima wishes to know if you have ever heard of an iron-plated ship before?"

Diego nodded.

"When I was at the siege of Antwerp, the Hollanders sent against our blockading fleet a large galleon whose sides they had covered over, even to her cage-works, with plates of iron. They expected great things from this craft, and named her the *Finis Belli*, which signifies in Latin 'The End of the War.' But she steered badly, ran aground on a shoal, heeled over at low tide till she was helpless, and so was captured by the ship which I then had the honor to command."

Swiftly Ichio translated this into Japanese, and presently put the Daimio's next question into Spanish:

"Since you have captured one iron ship, Don Diego, could you not capture another? Could you fight the tortoise-boat with a galleon like the *San Gregorio?*"

"Yes, in the open sea. Galleys are good only in sheltered waters. With her overhanging topsides and narrow hull, this tortoise-boat would roll vilely in any sort of sea, so that good gunnery would be impossible. Her iron sheathing can not be more than quarter-inch plate; otherwise its weight, carried so high above the water-line, would capsize and sink her even in a calm. The *San Gregorio's* culverins would smash her thin plating like glass."

"How much does a galleon like the *San Gregorio* cost?"

"She was built at the Cavité shipyards,

three years ago, for eight thousand *pesos*. Her guns and tackle cost as much more," Diego replied.

"The honorable Daimio would buy her for sixty thousand *pesos*—more than three times what she was worth new," said Ichio.

"I shall forward his Excellency's most liberal offer to the viceroy at Mexico City," Diego assured them, wondering where the Japanese could find a captain capable of commanding a Western war-galleon.

"And to you, oh Don Diego," continued the interpreter, "he offers lands worth ten thousand *koku* a year, and the fair castle of Kobugara, to you and to your heirs forever, if you will stay and be his admiral."

Diego's face was unmoved, but his heart bounded within him. Here was the chance he had been hoping for, which he might even have been moved to suggest himself, had not the Japanese played into his hand. It was a princely offer. Should he accept it, then he could go back to the *San Gregorio* with a light heart, and return to shore with Doña Ysabel. Her father and Don Feliz would doubtless object, but what could they do? He himself was free to resign from the service of Philip of Spain; and Gil Robles, the mate, was fully competent to take the galleon back across the Pacific.

Moreover, from the moment he had entered the hall and looked into the Daimio's frank young face and fearless eye, Diego had felt himself strongly attracted to Kurushima. Friendships had been few in Diego's lonely life; here, he knew instinctively, was a man who would make him a strong and loyal friend. Unknown to Diego, the same thought was in Kurushima's mind, as he sat on the cushioned mat and looked at his outland guest. Shrewd little Ichio glanced from one to the other, read their minds, and silently congratulated himself and his master, Hideyoshi.

"Tell the Lord Kurushima that I accept," said Diego, rising, "for his service seems one in which a man may gain much honor. Now I must go to the ship and come back with a friend, before the galleon resumes her voyage to Acapulco. When she has returned to Japan, as my Lord Kurushima's ship, then will I begin my duties as his admiral. Till then, I crave his hospitality for myself and one other person now on board the *San Gregorio*."

"Oh Don Diego!" Ichio entreated, "his Excellency wishes that you and whoever you may bring with you may be his guests for ten thousand years. But he says that he can not wait for the galleon to cross the great ocean and return. He must have her now, to sink the tortoise-boat as soon as possible, that Japan's armies may cross the seas. Delay might mean the ruin of our enterprise! The honorable Daimio must take possession of the *San Gregorio* today!"

DIEGO tapped his foot upon the floor.

"That," he answered calmly, "he can not do. I regret exceedingly that I am unable to dispose of his Majesty's ship without authorization."

"But, Don Diego," protested the voluble Ichio, "the crew will do whatever you bid them—you have but to order them ashore. None of those on board will be injured or deprived of anything: the cargo will be placed under seal and guarded by its owners and the soldiers of Lieutenant Gomez, till another ship can come from Manila to take everything away. And the great price that the Lord Kurushima is paying for the ship will surely compensate for the delay to those in authority in Mexico and Spain."

Diego knit his brows. Polite as the Daimio's assurances were, he felt a veiled threat under their silkiness. The Japanese needed his vessel now; evidently they would not brook delay. Yet his honor would not permit him, an officer of the king, to be false to his trust, no matter what it might cost himself. And that it might cost much he knew, for he was familiar with the reputation of the Japanese.

And with that thought came realization. The quiet, but evident purpose of those fishing-smacks—the gleam of armor in the temple-groves; the guard-boats crammed with swordsmen! He understood it all now: the Daimio would not wait for a reply from Spain; if he could not get the *San Gregorio* peacefully, he would try what force could do! Diego's stubborn heart hardened, and his reply was crisp.

"Be that as it may," he said firmly, "I can not do this thing his Excellency asks of me, for I am not yet in the service of the Lord Kurushima. I am, until he is pleased to accept my resignation, an officer of his Most Catholic Majesty, the King of Spain.

And until the sale of the galleon has been consummated, the *San Gregorio* is still the king's ship, which I, who have the honor to command her, will defend against any whosoever will try to take her by force of arms. You will make this clear to the Lord Kurushima, and add that I have the honor to wish him a very good afternoon."

And with a courtly bow, he turned and walked out of the audience hall, looking as unconcerned as if he were taking a stroll on the Prado. Inwardly, he was suffering all the tortures of the Inquisition. Before him rose the white, pleading face of Ysabel, doomed by his quixotic action to a hateful marriage, sacrificed to a pedantic point of honor. But, however willing he might be to stay with her in Japan, he could not steal the king's ship. And what was her happiness or his, compared to the honor of Spain? Holding his head high, Diego passed on.

But when he came to the outer courtyard of the castle, he found the gateway barred by a score of Japanese pikemen with lowered points. Other men-at-arms guarded the stone steps leading to the platform where, in time of siege, archers could stand to shoot over the battlemented parapet of the castle wall.

Out of the door of the audience hall came Kurushima, attended by Ichio and an armed guard.

"The Daimio regrets, oh Don Diego!" cried the interpreter, "that he must detain you here till he has seized the *San Gregorio*. And he hopes that you may yet become his admiral, and serve him as faithfully as you have served the King of Spain!"

"Tell the Daimio," answered Diego, looking swiftly about him, "that since he is coming to visit my ship, I must hasten aboard to prepare a welcome for him!"

Against the wall, hard by the castle gate, stood a wooden rack full of long, stout bamboo lances. Before any of the surprised Japanese could stop him, Diego had reached the rack and snatched out one of the fourteen-foot spears. Bringing it to the charge, he ran full-tilt across the gravel, not in the direction of the gate, but toward a long, blank stretch of the outer wall. Just as the spear-head seemed about to crash against the granite, Diego lowered and thrust it into the ground at the foot of the wall.

The butt of the shaft, with the man clinging to it, rose straight up into the air. Letting go of the lance, Diego dropped on his side on the broad platform of the wall, rose and dived headforemost through an embrasure into the deep waters of the castle moat.

A startled shout, half rage, half acclamation, went up from the astounded Japanese in the courtyard. A mounted retainer on the road outside reined up his horse at the sound, and at the sight of a dripping foreigner climbing out of the moat beside him. The horseman made the mistake of drawing up too close; just as he snatched out his sword, Diego was upon him. Putting one hand under the red-lacquered, shoe-like stirrup, the athletic Spaniard gave a great heave that lifted the other out of the saddle and dropped him, half-stunned and wholly bewildered, into the middle of the road. Before the retainer could scramble to his feet again, Diego had mounted and was galloping down the road to the shore.

Behind him, armed men were pouring in shouting hundreds out of the castle gate. Drums began to beat, conches sounded hoarsely; from both the thatch-roofed town on Diego's right and the huge old Buddhist temple on his left erupted sudden streams of men-at-arms. A matchlock roared; a flight of arrows whirred past the fugitive's head, but the range was long and the target far from stationary. Bare-legged peasants toiling in the wet paddy-fields looked up curiously at the hunted horseman, but made no attempt to stay him; farming was their trade, fighting their masters'.

Now the beach was very near. Drawn up on the sand like a Viking fleet were twenty or more great open row-boats, ready to be manned and pushed off. Diego thought of the flint and steel in his pouch; but there was no time to try burning the enemy's boats—the pursuers were too close. Straight down the beach and into the water he rode the panting pony, till the saddle was awash.

"Saint James be praised!" cried Diego fervently.

Halfway between him and the anchored galleon was the *San Gregorio's* long-boat, with a giant's rosary of fresh-filled water-casks bobbing astern.

"Ho, Gil Robles, to me!"

Standing up in his stirrups, Diego shouted

and waved his broad-brimmed felt hat with its dripping plume. The stocky figure in the stern of the long-boat looked 'round, waved back, whipped out a gleaming knife and cut the tow-rope.

"Even so, we have filled enough casks today to last us to the rain-belt of the upper latitudes," thought Diego, as he threw away his hat and dived from the saddle. "Good man, Gil!"

'Round came the long-boat, starboard oars backing, port oars pulling, in a smother of foam and a crackling roar of Biscayan oaths from the mate. Diego swam swiftly out to meet it, his long rapier hampered him cruelly, but he would not part with it. He swam under water as much as possible, coming to the surface only for a hastily-snatched breath and diving again, for fear of arrows from the shore.

But no arrows fell. Looking back as he swam, Diego saw the beach a solid mass of excited Japanese soldiery, and, in the front rank, archers lowering their bent bows at the imperative gestures of Kurushima, on horseback and in full armor at the water's edge.

"Heathen though he is," thought the grateful Spaniard, "there breathes not in all Christendom a more gallant knight and gentleman than Lord Kurushima!"

THIRTY strokes more, and Gil Robles was helping him into the long-boat. Away they went for the *San Gregorio*, the boat's crew pulling with every ounce they could throw into it, as they saw the swarming Japanese embark and push off from the shore.

Taking a deep breath into his aching lungs, Diego stood up in the stern-sheets and blew a long call on the silver whistle hung 'round his neck. Back shrilled an answer from the boatswain on the ship; the soldiers' trumpeter sounded the call to arms.

Men swarmed up the galleon's shrouds and lay out on the yards. 'Round creaked the windlass, as the huge hempen anchor-cable writhed in through the hawse-hole like a frightened snake. Foresail and main-sail, huge single topsails—top-gallants and royals there were none—the little square spritsail under the high-steeved bowsprit and the tall, graceful lateen on the mizzen—all were set and the anchor apeak, as the long-boat shot 'round the *San Gregorio's* bows and along her starboard side.

Now the off-shore breeze brought her head 'round and her port battery to bear on the approaching Japanese flotilla.

"Let them have it!" shouted Diego, as he came over the rail.

Already loaded and run out, the nine culverins on the gun-deck and the light pieces on the poop and forecastle thundered together. Before the dense cloud of sulfurous smoke had lifted, the galleon was running, with the wind on her starboard quarter, for the open sea.

"The saints be praised, the heathen are all slain!" cried a fat Manila silk-dealer, with pious fervor.

"Two boats sunk, one sinking, the rest coming on bravely," corrected Diego, peering through the lifting powder-smoke astern. "How craftily they follow in our wake—we have not a gun to bear. Lay aft the musketeers! Bid the master-gunner shift two culverins to the stern-ports!"

"Why not round to, and give them another broadside?" asked Gil Robles.

"I dare not, in this narrow channel betwixt the inner haven and the sea," replied the captain in a low voice. "Should we touch bottom, or the wind fail us before we reach open water, they will lay us aboard. And there are a thousand good fighting men in those craft, while we have less than three-score fit to bear arms.

"Gentlemen," he added in a louder voice, to the anxiously listening passengers, "arm yourselves and report for duty at your appointed stations. Be of good cheer, for it may be given us this day to uphold the honor of Spain! Rig the waist-cloths, there! Send round-shot up to the tops and yards! Make ready the bases, minions and murderer-guns! Pikemen, stand by the rail! Carpenter, make hot the pitch! Lieutenant Gomez, the after-castle is your charge; Señor Robles, the forecastle is your station. I myself will hold the waist."

High-built at stem and stern were the galleons of those days; the forecastle was indeed a castle set in the fore part of the ship, the poop was another fortress towering aft. The low waist lay like a valley between them; to raise its sides and make them harder for a foe to scale, strips of stout canvas, painted with gay armorial devices, were stretched along the top of the bulwarks from poop to forecastle. These were the waist-cloths, ancestors of the nineteenth-century boarding-net.

Mounted at the break of poop and forecastle were the bases, minions and murderers; wicked little breech-loading swivels that could sweep any part of deck or rail with a storm of small shot.

"Boy, bring me my armor!" cried Diego; but the cabin-boy was below, sanding the gun-deck.

Then, suddenly, some one stood by the captain's side, placing the helmet tenderly on his head, buckling on his breast and back plates. It was Ysabel, careless of who might see.

"I failed ashore," he whispered. "It was my fault; forgive me, and farewell."

Her answer, prompted perhaps by the excitement of the moment, perhaps by the certainty of betrayal by the parrot, was to kiss Diego squarely on the lips, in the sight of the whole crew—and of Don Feliz de Arruego! Passing by her infuriated betrothed as if he did not exist, she went into the little chapel of Saint Gregory, that opened off the main cabin, and knelt before the altar, where the priests and friars were praying for deliverance from the fury of the heathen.

On plunged the galleon, at the top of her ponderous speed; the wind was freshening, the ebb-tide ran like a mill-race down the narrow channel. But the long, many-oared craft astern gained steadily, urged by the straining efforts of the rowers, till they were not quite within musket-shot. At that distance they remained, holding their position easily, but making no effort to gain.

"I like it not," said Lieutenant Gomez, as Diego came up to inspect the defenses of the poop. "Why do the heathen follow us so tamely, down this defile to the open, where they know we can turn and blow them to pieces? Being the swifter, why do they not press the pursuit?"

"Because," answered the captain, "they have blocked the mouth of the channel with those fishing-smacks I pointed out to you."

"But there is much room at either end of their line," said the infantry-officer, peering ahead at the little fleet of anchored junks. "Why not outflank and march past them, on the right or left?"

"Good tactics for a soldier," Diego commented. "But this is the sea. It is too shoal. We must hold on and run one of them down."

"Charge home and trample them under foot? I have never fought on the sea, but I perceive I shall do so under a wise and valorous general. God keep you, Don Diego!"

"And you, Don Pablo!"

Wringing the simple-hearted little soldier's hand, Diego went below to the gun-deck, to train, himself, the bow-chasers on the line of anchored junks, now nearly within range. There were five of them, lying squarely across the fairway, broadside on to the approaching galleon. Nets were stretched between them; but there was not a sign of life on their decks.

Firing a first shot over them to give fair warning—of which they took no heed—Diego let drive at the bow and stern of the midmost junk, hoping to smash the bitts and cut her cables. But that was too accurate work for the primitive smooth-bores, on a high-built, deep-pitching galleon. Down came the junk's foremast, and a cloud of splinters flew from her rotten top-sides; that was all.

"A worn-out, empty hulk," said Gil Robles, as Diego came on deck again. "With our weight and speed, we should ride right over her."

There was no other way. Any attempt to check their own ungainly craft in that narrow tide-race would have piled her up on the sands, a helpless prey to the wolf-pack following astern.

Hold her steady! We are on her!"

With a great crash of splintering timbers, the bluff bows of the *San Gregorio* crushed through the frail hull of the fishing-junk, snapping her ribs and deck-beams like the veins of a dried leaf. Then the incredible happened. Instead of sinking or breaking in two, the shattered, distorted wreck wrapped itself 'round the destroyer's forefoot, staying her progress, bringing her, inside of ten seconds, from full speed to a dead standstill.

The strain on the *San Gregorio's* fabric was terrific—no modern wind-jammer could have suffered it without losing most of her top-hamper. But the Manila-Acapulco galleons had small sail area, teak masts and massive rigging of pure abacá fiber. Though every inch of her shrieked in protest, nothing carried away.

Her plight, however, was hideously obvious. The wrecked junk plastered 'round her bows was held together and made fast

by thick grass hawsers to her four consorts; and each of the five was double-anchored, bow and stern! The galleon's impact had bent the line of junks, causing the two nearest the wreck to drag their anchors, till the Japanese craft were close up under the *San Gregorio's* forecastle, one on either side.

"Clear away that wreckage! Cut the cables!"

GIL ROBLES and a dozen seamen swarmed down over the bows, knife and hatchet in hand. But before they could sever a single strand, there erupted from the holds of the four uninjured junks a shrieking horde of naked brown men brandishing naked steel. Those that were near enough leaped down with high-heaved blades; others dived overboard and swam round to the wreck, holding their swords in their teeth.

Gil Robles split the first comer's skull with his hatchet. But the odds were too great; three of the galleon's crew were literally chopped to pieces there on the wreck. Fighting furiously, the mate and the rest of his detail made good their retreat up over the bows, while the heathen hacked at them from below. At last they were once more sheltered by the high, square-built forecastle. Here they turned on their pursuers, and hurled the foremost foemen down into the sea.

"Send forward the musketeers," implored Gil Robles, swinging his dripping hatchet. "Swivels and musketeers!"

But a roar of musketry from the poop told him the soldiers were busy aft. Well they might be. The Japanese flotilla astern was closing in on the trapped galleon as fast as oars could drive it. Trapped she was, but not defenseless—the *San Gregorio's* stern-chasers, loaded with a solid-shot and a bag of bullets each, smashed one crowded rowboat and made fearful havoc aboard three more.

"Well done, Master-Gunner!" shouted Diego down the main-hatch. "Cease firing! Run in and secure your guns—the boats will be too close alongside to hit before you can reload. Close and make fast the port-shutters; then on deck, all!"

A savage yell of triumph burst from the throats of the bloodthirsty swordsmen aboard the two leading Japanese craft. One to port and one to starboard, they swept up and made fast alongside the *San Gregorio's* waist. The eager warriors on board them took no heed of the galleon's topmen, who, having furled and stowed the fore and mainsails, lay out on the lower yards. Yet ready to the hands of those topmen lurked death and destruction. Knives flashed through lanyards, and a great iron cannon-ball dropped like a thunderbolt from aloft on each boat beneath, smashing huge holes through the bottom-boards. Few were the men-at-arms of the first two boat-loads that did not go down with their shattered transports.

Those Japanese that had the chance to leap for the galleon's main-chains, and the luck to get a hand-hold, pulled themselves up pluckily and bravely tried to scramble aboard. But at each tell-tale inward bulge of the baffling waist-cloths, a Spanish pike or sword-point would lunge through canvas and flesh together.

Arrows tore through the galleon's rigging. A big negro on the main-yard fell screaming into the sea, a gaily-feathered shaft sticking out from between his shoulder-blades. Back scrambled his mates to the shelter of the round, high-walled fighting-tops; their trick had worked well, but it could be worked but once. The rest of the Japanese flotilla had now come up, its archers loosing swiftly, its eager swordsmen ready to board.

The Spanish musket-balls splintered their gunwales and tore through their armor, inflicting horrible, tearing wounds; but in spite of it, the sampans grappled the *San Gregorio* fore and aft, port and starboard, as many as could crowd alongside. The rest vomited their swordsmen over the side and into the already packed hulls of those that were at close grips. Trained to scale walls and surmount all obstacles, the gallant Samurai, burdened as they were with armor, swarmed up the sides of the galleon as easily as the naked men from the junks.

Their keen swords slashed away the waist-cloths, now sodden with blood and stuck full of arrows. Only point or ball told against them; no cutlas edge could shear through their strange, loose-meshed mail of lacquered steel.

Eight times the Japanese won a footing on the deck amidships. Eight times the murderer-guns from poop or forecastle

tore through the dense mass of them, gashing, shattering, till the fearless boarders reeled, their ranks decimated. Eight times Diego led a handful of weary pikemen in a charge that drove the survivors back into the sea. His splendid spirit, which had trained and inspired the motley crew of the *San Gregorio*—which was more of an armed passenger ship than a man-of-war—urged them on now to do more than their best, to face and hurl back professional warriors.

But no sooner was one boarding party swept away than a fresh onslaught rolled up over the rail. It was like fighting the waves of the sea. Hundreds of the Japanese remained, and the defenders were now very few. Half those that had held the waist lay dead or desperately wounded on the deck, mingling their blood with that of their fallen foes; and ever the heavy, two-handed Oriental swords sheared through the plates of their dripping armor. And now from the forecastle came a despairing cry.

"More men!" gasped Gil Robles. "More men!"

Glancing swiftly about to count his depleted forces, Diego caught sight of a gorgeous, over-armored figure slinking away toward the shelter of the cabin.

"Don Feliz!" he cried roughly. "Back to your post! What? Your blade is as clean as it was yesterday! Here by me, you dog, and show yourself a man, or by the saints, I will kill you with my own hand!"

The speculator turned toward him a face gray with terror. The flashing Japanese swords had frightened from Arruego all the little manhood he possessed. His diseased imagination pictured those great, razor-edged blades shearing through his shrinking flesh; but the captain's eyes filled him with a fear more imminent, more terrible than the fear of the shouting, black-masked Japanese. He staggered over to Diego's side, his rapier trembling in his hand.

"*Señor Capitán*," reported a musketeer, saluting with a powder-blackened hand, "Lieutenant Gomez bids me say that he can not hold the poop without reenforcements. Thrice have the heathen scaled the quarter-gallery and nigh forced their way in through the stern-windows of the cabin!"

"Then we must ply them with the murderer-guns," thought Diego, and beckoned the master-gunner to him. "Shift two swivels to the after-rail and two others to the forecastle-head!" he commanded.

But the old master-gunner made a sign of negation.

"They are all too hot to be shifted, or reloaded either. The last chamber we managed to wedge home exploded with the heat of the breech before I could touch fire to it. Unless you can hold them off with point and edge, you must strike or sound a parley."

"Never!" replied Diego. "I will fight to the end, and then order you to blow up the magazine!"

"And I will obey," answered the master-gunner steadily. "But there are only two barrels of powder left."

"Then listen," said the captain, "and I will tell you what to do with them. The scheme is desperate, but we have no other hope."

"OH LORD OF TOSA," protested Kurushima's gray-haired second in command, "half our men are slain, the rest are weary and sorely wounded, and this devil-ship is as strong as ever! Whenever we win her deck and drive back her crew, their high-placed guns sweep us away as an angry chess-player sweeps the pieces from the board. Their weapons are too powerful; their captain, whose sword is everywhere, is no mortal but a demon—else how could he have flown over our castle-wall? Let us give up and row back to the shore! This is worse than the tortoise-boat!"

"Let dogs and cowards pull for the shore!" cried Kurushima. "Let the true Samurai follow me!"

Without waiting to see if any followed, the Daimio sprang from the stern of his own disabled boat to that of another, half-full of blood-tinged water, whose bow touched the *San Gregorio's* waist. Pulling himself up by the channels, he climbed to the gunwale and stood there, slashing away the tattered waist-cloths, till he could look down upon the deck.

Before him stood a Spaniard: a sallow, effeminate-looking man with cunning, shifty eyes and livid face, whose splendid Milanese breastplate, cuishes, and morion showed no mark of battle. Don Feliz de Arruego,

the successful speculator in *billetes*, had been equally successful in keeping himself out of harm's way till now, just after Diego had caught him skulking, and ordered him to the rail. And fear of his captain kept him there, though nothing could make him fight like a man.

But now up rose before him, framed in blood-stained canvas, the fearsome figure of a Japanese warrior, whose loose-fitting armor made his crouching body seem monstrously misshapen; beneath the crested helmet, his face was twisted into a hideous war-mask, from which his eyes, black and gleaming, shot terror into Arruego's craven soul. Forgetting that he held a sword in his own hand, the poor wretch did the most dangerous thing possible; he turned his back and fled.

Like a wildcat, Kurushima sprang after him from the top of the five-foot bulwark; and as he sprang, he raised his two-handed sword on high and brought it down with all his weight and strength on the other's helmeted head. Through steel and scalp and skull the keen-edged blade shore its way, till the cloven morion fell to the deck in two pieces. Tottering with hands outflung, Feliz fell dead over the fragments of his own morion.

Wrenching his sword free, the Daimio turned to face a seaman who thrust at him with a pike. With three strokes of incredible swiftness, Kurushima parried the thrust, cut the pike-head from its staff, and sent the seaman's own head rolling after it into the scuppers. This was too much—the other Spaniards bunched near shrank back before him and away from the rail, over which more Japanese, encouraged by their lord's example, were clambering in growing numbers.

"Oh, men of Tosa!" shouted Kurushima. "The ship is ours!"

"Hold them five minutes!" rang an answering voice in Spanish. "Hold them off five minutes, and we are free!"

And rallying his weary crew, Diego de Torres leaped forward and crossed swords with Kurushima. Arch-types of the Eastern and Western warriors of their day, the two engaged in single combat, unhindered by the general mêlée raging 'round them. No other Spaniard wished to meddle with the terrible Daimio; and no Japanese warrior would have presumed to interfere in a battle-field duel between two chiefs.

Diego, fighting for time, stood on the defense; but Kurushima attacked with desperate speed and fury. He did not know what new and terrible means of resistance the galleon's crew might use at any moment, and he could see his own men look anxiously up at the silent swivels, even as they fought. And ever in Kurushima's mind was a vision of the *San Gregorio*, under his own command, sinking the tortoise-boat and freeing the way for Japan's armies to march on to endless conquests. The thought that on the outcome of this combat hung the fate of Asia nerved his every blow.

In all Japan, few swordsmen were Kurushima's equal. His strokes sheared through the stoutest mail, his feints were dazzling, his sureness of eye and hand proverbial. With all his tremendous strength and skill, he cut and slashed, leaping back and forth to confuse his opponent. Now he struck for Diego's head, now for his right shoulder, now for his left thigh, turning his blade in mid-stroke, till it seemed to fill the air about him with a shimmering mist.

But wherever it fell, the Japanese sword beat and glanced off the parrying blade of the Spanish rapier. Never was the contact at such an angle that the edge of the heavy two-handed weapon could bite into and cut through the slender ribbon of steel which always met and turned it. The European's supple wrist-play gave him a freedom and length of reach unknown to the Samurai, who held his long hilt rigidly with both hands. And ever as Diego parried, he studied the strength and weakness of Kurushima's strange, silk-braided mail, designed to turn the edge—but not the point.

Suddenly, as Kurushima heaved up his sword for a mighty blow, a cold, tingling pang shot through his exposed breast. His stroke stayed in mid-air, he glanced down, and saw Diego's silver hilt pressed firmly against his breast-bone, the Spaniard's arm outstretched behind it. With a sharp pull, Diego withdrew his rapier. A fountain of blood spurted after it; the long blade itself was bloody to the point. Kurushima strove to bring down his own sword, but instead, he heaved a long sigh and slid in a crumpled heap to the deck.

At that very moment, two mighty columns of water, crested with shattered bits of wood, cordage and human fragments, spouted high into the air from under the

galleon's bows. The roar of a double explosion followed instantly. In obedience to the captain's orders, the old master-gunner and his mates had dropped the last two barrels of powder, fitted with burning fuses, over the bows to blow away the tangled mass of wreckage and hawsers that held the ship a prisoner. By one of those rare miracles that sometimes crown supreme daring, the explosion had done its intended work without damaging the galleon.

The *San Gregorio*, her bows heaved high in the air by the force of the concussion, shivered, and brought them down with a force that snapped the last strands which bound her. Urged by wind and tide, the galleon surged ahead, out of the mouth of the channel and into the open sea.

Terrified by this fearful phenomenon, and by the fall of their invincible Daimio, most of the surviving Japanese turned and threw themselves overside. The rest cast down their weapons and begged for mercy, which was readily granted, for the *San Gregorio* was now too desperately short-handed to continue the fight.

"*Te Deum Laudamus!*" sang the priests and friars in the chapel.

Diego, kneeling on the crimsoned deck, felt two soft arms steal 'round his neck, felt a kiss upon his cheek.

"I saw it all," whispered Ysabel. "Brave man! That other is dead, too; nothing can keep us apart any more."

"Nothing," Diego answered; then he loosed the clinging arms.

He had no thought of prayer, of thanksgiving for victory; no thought of his ship that he had saved; little even of the riches and the love he had won with the Lady Ysabel. His thoughts were all for his gallant foe.

"He is dying," he whispered to the girl, and turned once more to the prostrate Japanese, striving desperately to stanch the wound which he had himself inflicted.

At the touch of Diego's hand, Kurushima's body stiffened, his eyes opened, his right arm instinctively raised itself and the sword to which his fingers still clung. His undaunted will forced the dying hand to lift it an inch, two inches, from the deck.

Then, as his eyes met and recognized Diego's, the battle-light died out of the Daimio's face, and a smile of friendship shone faintly in its stead. The tired right hand relaxed its grip on the hilt. The sword fell clanging on the deck; the soul of the Samurai had passed.

AN ALASKAN TO WILD GEESE

by ED. L. CARSON

AT EARLY dawn, or in the fading light,
Past forests that now stand without a leaf,
With weird and mournful cry from dizzy height
Like spirits damned and groaning in their grief;
In wedge formation marked against the sky
Their southward way with cautious speed they take,
So, following their leader, on they fly
While Winter's warnings follow in their wake.

They know no rigors of the frost and cold,
Far to the south they seek the sun-kissed seas;
On never-freezing streams their wings they fold
Or rest on limpid lake in balmy breeze;
While we who have elected here to stay
And face Alaskan gloom and cold intense,
Will wonder as we watch their flight each day
Which of us really shows the better sense.

FARNHAM BISHOP and Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur give us some interesting facts in connection with their story in this issue. If the period in which the tale is laid is as interesting and little known to you as it was to me, you will find the following facts good reading. These two men have given us stories laid in many places and in many periods of the past. Most of our stories "get by" uncriticized as to their facts and color, but it is one thing to have these correct in a story of modern times, and quite another thing to have them correct even as to details in tales laid anywhere from half a century to several thousand years ago. There are fewer who are equipped to criticize, but these few are zealous and exacting.

Berkeley, California.

Ironclads, breech-loading artillery and Japanese spies in Manila may seem a bit anachronistic in a story of the sixteenth century, but all three of those things were contemporaries of William Shakespeare and Henry of Navarre. The Korean "tortoise-boat" and the Dutch armored galleon are described exactly as set down in history, both as to appearance and actions. There is an excellent picture and description of the early breech-loading swivel on page 192, Vol. 20, of the Encyclopædia Britannica, in the article on "Ordnance." And Manila was never worse plagued with Japanese spies and the fear of Nippon than it was in the last decade of the sixteenth century.

JAPAN had not yet become the "Hermit Kingdom;" on the contrary, it was sending forth its adventurers to every corner of the Far East and even across the Pacific. The conquest of Korea was but the first step in the ambitious plans of the great Hideyoshi, when the tortoise-boat taught Japan a lesson in sea-power which it remembered in 1894 and 1904-1905. If the Portuguese had been willing to sell Hideyoshi those two war-galleons he had tried to buy from them, a few years earlier, there is no telling what the history of the Far East would have been.

Our having Hideyoshi try to capture a Manila-Acapulco galleon is fiction. But in 1596 the galleon *San Felipe* was wrecked and plundered in the Japanese port of Hurado, and six years later the *Espiritu Santo* was attacked there and fought her way out through a Japanese flotilla. Her captain, Lope de Ulloa, was a splendid sea-fighter—the *Diego de Torres* of our story. "Of persons of his quality and talent," wrote the Conde de Monterey, Viceroy of Mexico, to the King of Spain, "there is a great lack in the Southern Sea."

KURUSHIMA is as genuine a Japanese figure as the everlasting sneaky spy who is always being caught with the plans of Corregidor up his sleeve. Personally, I should like to see less of the latter in our magazines and newspapers, now that we and the Japanese are fighting the same foe. Let Hearst and the Kaiser do it.

The title is from the well-known line in Kipling's "Ballad of East and West:"

"When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth."—FARNHAM BISHOP.

THE Chicago Chapter of the Adventurers' Club is entitled to an even prouder service-flag than the New York Chapter with its nearly fifty stars but larger membership. The Chicago membership at this writing is eighty-eight. Out of these thirty-six have gone into service, one is in France with the Red Cross, two are war correspondents and one is with the Council of Defense at Washington—forty in all, most of them commissioned officers. Here is the list:

Col. Henry A. Allen, 108th Engrs., 33d Div.; Capt. B. C. Allin, 108th Engrs., Co. B, 33d Div.; Lieut. Frank W. Alsip, U. S. A., Aviat. Sec.; Capt. G. H. Anderson, 18th Hussars, British Army, South Africa; Lieut. Frank Baackes, Jr., U. S. A., Statistical Div.; Capt. Edward Barclay, U. S. A., Truck Co. (Overseas) Port of Embarc.; John Bass, War Correspondent, Somewhere in France; Capt. Chas. L. Binno, U. S. A., Q. M. D.; Ben S. Boyce, U. S. A., Co. C, Signal Corps, 2d Fld. Battalion; Lieut. C. W. Brood, U. S. A., Co. B, 24th Engrs.; Leon Brokman, Russian Spec. Service; Ensign Otis B. Duncan, U. S. S. *Des Moines;* Lieut. Herbert H. Evans, U. S. Navy Yard; Maj. W. Robt. Foran, 17 Fordhook Ave., Ealing, W. London (now in India); Lieut. W. G. Hamilton, 1st Batt., Can. Black Watch (sick leave); Lieut. Wm. M. Hunt, U. S. A.; Capt. R. Hugh Knyvott, Intell. Off., 15th Austral. Inf., Base P. O., London; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky, U. S. A., Asst. Post Q. M.; Major Lee A. McCalla, F. A. N. A., 164th Depot Brigade; Capt. Jos. Mattos (deceased—killed in colored riot, Houston, Texas); John T. McCutcheon, War Correspondent; Carl G. Macvitty, Red Cross (Somewhere in France); Capt. Edward Maher, U. S. A., Q. M. D.; Lieut. Barrett O'Hara, ————; Lieut. H. Nelson Orr, U. S. A., Med. Dept., Port of Embarcat., Surgeon's Off.; Capt. B. W. Phillips,

U. S. A., 31st Infantry; Lieut. W. Chandler Peak, U. S. A.; Maj. R. W. Patterson, 1st Oklahoma Engrs.; Lawrence R. Richey, U. S. Special Service; Dr. Daniel W. Rogers, U. S. Med. Reserve, 33d Div.; Philip Sawyer, U. S. Merchant Marine, S. S. *New York;* Lieut. Edson M. Steward, U. S. A., 78th Div., Regulars; Maj. S. C. Stanton, U. S. A., Med. Dept.; Capt. Philip Sampson, U. S. A., Instr. Bayonet Practise; James Sutherland, British Army, South Africa; Lieutenant Lloyd E. Thrush, U. S. A., Q. M. D.; Capt. Richard C. Travers, U. S. A.; Lieut. Warren C. Woodward, U. S. A., Aviat. Corps, Signal School; Col. Sir F. Younghusband, Brit. Forces, 8 Buckingham Gate, London, S.W., England; Douglas W. Clinch, Room 418, Council of Defense, Washington, D. C.

FOLLOWING our Camp-Fire custom, T. Nichols, with his first story in our magazine, stands up and introduces himself:

There are many kinds of adventure, but of them all Life is the greatest, the most fascinating, grim, uncertain.

LOOKING back over my own life, I am startled by the planlessness, aimlessness, changefulness of it; it appears to be a series of haphazard events, that only by a magic trick of fate has been redeemed, woven into a harmonious whole. It has been adventurous, more so perhaps than the majority of lives. Adventure was bred in me. Born by one of the prettiest of Norwegian fjords, where every knoll was a monument to some ancient hero, where every name was an echo of battle-blasts and songs of swords, I received as a legitimate heritage the roving spirit of the Vikings.

The intensest recollections of my childhood are memories of adventure and dreams of adventure. Clearly I recall the long Winter evenings on the farm when I sat on father's knee listening to tales of his adventures on sea and land in many countries and climes. They were exciting, breathless adventures, possible only under the more primitive conditions of half a century ago. Each tale was a tonic to my imagination, stimulated my mind to fantastic activities. At night, before going to sleep, I invented the most gorgeous careers for myself. I was not many inches tall when I had irrevocably decided to leave home "when I grew big."

LATER when I was old enough to consider it childish and effeminate to sit on my father's knee, other factors nursed my imagination and adventurous spirit. There were, for instance, the docks of the nearby seaport with their ceaseless activities, and the men-of-war, English, German and French, that each Summer dropped anchor, with much booming of guns, in the roadstead. Nothing could be more entrancing to a boy than these martial vessels, or the crews with their gay irresponsible ways and incomprehensible, strangely musical speech. Often of a Sunday morning my two brothers and I trudged the eight miles to town to marvel at them. At times the sailors would take us aboard in their steam-launches, and we explored the ships from keel to bridge. An enchanted fairyland they were, with their gleaming torpedoes, intricate quick-firers, immense turrets, and great sleek guns that seemed alive, seemed to long for something to destroy.

THEN there was school, of course, first public school, located about three miles from my home, and later high school in the city. The latter was a private afternoon school and caused me much inconvenience. As I continued to live at home, I had to go by railroad in to town every day at noon; and at night, because of a conflict between the schedule and my classes, I was obliged to wait until eleven o'clock for a train, arriving at my station half an hour later; and then after walking three miles along lonely roads, I could finally sit down to my supper and go to bed.

I WAS not yet seventeen years old when I left home one February evening. I remember vividly the train-ride, the dark desolate docks, and the shadowy background of the city asleep on the hillside, with a starless clouded sky overhead. Then followed a two-day journey down the coast inside a chain of bleak rocky islands forming a rampart against the ocean; then a trip across the North Sea in the steerage in a storm; a page of Dante's "Inferno." Then England, wonderfully interesting, and eleven days on the ocean; then America, and a train-ride into the heart of the country.

BUT this sketch of my life is becoming too long. Some day, perhaps, I shall write a fuller account, but here I can only hint at the happenings of the years that followed. I was a boy alone in a strange country, with only a smattering of the language, a hounding sense of my own uselessness, unimportance, and thousands of miles from home. There were years of restlessness, of grim adventure, doing odd work in odd places, searching for a position in the order of things. Half of the States in the Union are associated with memories in my mind; whenever I hear mentioned Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, recollections are brought up; talk of the sea and sailing and I can relate personal experiences.

But throughout these first aimless years one purpose was my constant companion, to master the English language. It seemed a hopeless task but was too fascinating to be let alone. It was an adventure in itself the hunting through books for new words, jotting them down, and getting their meaning whenever a dictionary was within reach.

In spite of their harshness, however, those years were kind. I became acquainted with life, gained a greater knowledge of myself; and out of the chaos of my mind grew definite aims which in later less outwardly exciting years I have tried to realize. I have had a few hard lessons, and I hope I have profited by them. Life owes me nothing. Outweighing all disappointments, failures, is the gift, the grant of a tomorrow.

BEFORE I close this confidential but necessarily rambling talk with you, the readers of the "Camp-Fire," I wish to mention my work. I am new in the fiction field; but in the future I hope to devote all my time and energy to it. I do not intend to write stories because the work is easy. It isn't. I wish to write because I wish to justify my existence, to give something of myself to the world, to you. And I want to please you if I can; I want you to like me; you are necessary to me. And you may be assured I shall never try to impose upon you. Whenever you see my name at the head of a story, I want you to say, "This story may not be

great, but it represents the best effort of a man who has had his tussle with life, just as I have, and therefore there must be something worth while in it."

AS FOR the story of mine appearing in this number I have little to say. It must speak for itself. Doubtless it has many faults, but it was the best I could do at the time. I trust I shall do better in the future; I trust I shall always do better in the future. Accept this first story, then, not as a finished, solitary product, but as a promise of a beginning.—T. NICHOLS.

DECEMBER thirteenth I received a letter from our comrade and member of our writers' brigade, Major W. Robert Foran, written in India September thirteenth, in reply to a letter written by me June thirteenth—the three being written three months apart to the day and all on the thirteenth. Glad I'm not superstitious, and the hoodoo seems not to have settled on him either, for he reports himself fit with nothing to kick about except heat. Here's more good luck to him.

EARLY in the Winter came a letter from "Canuck," which I've been unable to give until now, but which is as interesting and to the point now as it was then:

Ottawa, Can.

Am back again after four months in the north. I've had a wonderful time in the last north of northwestern Quebec, seen some grand game areas, directed probably the finest film of live game (moose) in action, etc., yet obtained, am tanned like one of my Indians and feeling tuned to a Winter's hibernation.

I HAVE followed with considerable interest your Camp-Fire talks on what all Americans owe the United States, and can only say I'm with you in all you've expressed—just as you've said it. The snake of treason—an ugly word but the only one that fits, unfortunately—must be scotched and done with absolutely no compunction; call them what you will—pro-Germans or anything else—they're all anti-Americans and their sub-rosa activities, to be squelched, must have radical application of the National knife.

The British, including the Canadian, have always been prone to allowing too much rope to treasonable citizens, and others calling themselves such, of this country and of the British Isles. Just in the same way is the ordinary American, as I know him, similarly unbelieving in his stand that "it's nothing but smoke." As I know the foreign element, whether the ignorant immigrant or the educated resident, while you can understand an out-and-outer, it is strange but true that many who should know better, who are actual citizens of the United States, having sworn allegiance to it, renouncing their former allegiance to any and all other States or republics, are the ones who at present have been and still are getting away with un-American actions.

AS I see it, applicable to Canada and to the United States, to Great Britain, to France, Italy or any of the other nations fighting in this war of democracy against the right of might, every one is either heart and soul for his own country and its allies or else he is an enemy. If the latter, why, in the name of common sense is he not promptly taken directly into the State's hands and treated as an enemy must be?

Cutting out newspapers and publications in any language other than the national one is a primary essential. Over here in Canada the danger of permitting any other is seen in French Quebec, where rabid anti-British, anti-French, anti-Canadian, anti-conscription, all are prevalent and all are fed and inflamed by the "Nationalist" French press. We have over here much anti-Ally underground work that will never be successfully disposed of with gloves.—S. E. SANGSTER.

IT IS seldom that one of our woman members joins our writers' brigade, but Lotta Adele Gannett, with a story in this issue, does so and in accordance with Camp-Fire custom rises and introduces herself. I know she will be warmly welcomed.

I never quite get used to the fact that so many women read *Adventure*. Yet it is not strange, after all. A woman does not necessarily prefer soft love-stories forever and forever. We all know plenty of women whose chief interests do not lie in that direction and it is natural that they, too, should like to turn to stories dealing more largely with other emotions than those of sex.

Also there are plenty of women who, though they like clean love-stories, do *not* care for the kind whose interest is dependent chiefly upon the physical aspects of sex. We keep our magazine as clean and wholesome as we can. We want the kind of reader who likes to look upon the world as it is but prefers not to look at it through sex spectacles that tinge everything in the world with one color, the kind of reader who cares most for the big, clean, fresh-air things of life. A magazine generally gets the kind of reader it aims for and, of course, there is nothing strange in there being many women who like exactly what our type of man likes. The women members of our Camp-Fire can be sure that they get from their men comrades exactly the kind of welcome they want from us, a frank, clean, "man to man" fellowship.

Chicago, Ill.

There is so little I've done that I'm afraid it will not be at all interesting. I was born of poor but respectful parents in the little old State of New Jersey—one of a large family who saw to it that I did not develop much conceit. I was born

in June, married in June and my boy was born in June, the last-named event taking place while I was still well within my teens, the second, after I'd entered my teens by a very few years indeed. I don't know why I married so young unless some one whispered in my ear that men were getting scarce. So that now I have a boy who says he is big enough to eat pie off my head.

I TOOK a business course after my marriage when reverses came and finished the course in three months and three weeks. Have two records on the typewriter—nobody gave them to me, I took them myself. One is erratic touch and the other is the discovery of the greatest number of new ways to make mistakes every day. I might possibly do better work on the machine if I could bring myself down to less of a hurry in doing things. But—there is so much to do and be seen in this little old world and I've barely touched the edges.

I'VE been from ocean to ocean, dipped in one and rode on the other. Love Colorado and am going to camp out in its mountains before I'm many years older. I started to write five years ago—did three stories the first year, three or four the next and about the same the next, for two years I've been working at it fairly regularly for me.

I came to Chicago seven years ago, weighing one-hundred and thirty-three pounds—and look at me now, darn it! I'm American to the backbone and beyond. Dad served three years in the Civil War, entering when he was sixteen, and two maternal uncles served, one being killed in battle, so I'm not a bit neutral now—nor was I before we entered this war, and my greatest hope is that it doesn't end till the Kaiser is *licked*.

I think I shall remain at thirty-five years old—permanently, and I love to laugh.

AS I told you, the incident on the Atlantic City pier in my story "When Jim Came Into His Own" was taken from an actual occurrence. The man who did it is six feet four and weighs two hundred and forty pounds, and when the little event was finished the only thing to show that he'd been at all deeply interested, was that his cigar lay at his feet, bitten in two. He nearly converted me to spiritualism—or something—for he is the only person I ever knew who could materialize out of thin air. I'll take a vow that I've been on the street and no one in sight for two blocks in four directions and in an instant he has stood beside me, looking about like Billy Penn on the Philadelphia City Hall.

Here's hoping to our acquaintance being freely and long continued—LOTTA ADELE GANNETT.

WORD from our comrade, Harry C. Winters, now convalescent from hospital from England. Tommy need not worry. Our boys will, like the Canadians, come across with the deeds he's asking for. Hold up your end, Tommy, and our boys will hold up theirs. You've too many deeds behind you to let yourself get worried by other people's words. And I hope Comrade Winters, Australian, knows that one of America's—and Canada's—national games is kidding, and that when you play that game you don't let it worry you. Also, comrade, don't forget that the Australians rank as high as talkers as they do as blamed good fighters. Nevertheless your advice is sound and doubtless needed. Stick together? Of course. Live clean? You bet it's necessary.

Alnwick, England.

Evidently my last two letters miscarried, probably strafed by U-boats. Left hospital and am now in the running again, expecting to go back to the front shortly. I'm glad Uncle Sam has taken a hand. It should expedite matters. The first contingent got a very warm welcome; the people rose to the occasion. Seem men of fine physique; if they are as good as they look, should give a good account of themselves.

ONE thing I'd warn the boys of is this: Don't blow the horn too loud. Tommy is rather a queer chap and doesn't like to be told by new arrivals that they have come to finish the war. Of course it's only the —— fool youngsters that do so. What Tommy wants is deeds, not words. Let the men prove worthy by their actions and he'll find in Thomas a friend to tie to, who won't let him down.

The boys have a high standard to live up to. Personally, from my knowledge of the American, I know he can and will live up to it, but these few words of advice, from one who has had three years of it, may not come amiss. If we are to win the campaign, it behooves us to stick together, live clean. You know what I mean by that. And, above all, don't talk too much, act.

OLD Fritz is a hard man to beat and has put up a dashing fight and he's not beat yet. Please God, before next Spring we'll have him where we want him. These peace cranks want discouraging, when we have peace we want one on a solid and lasting basis and Fritz will not have the dictating of the terms. Best respects to the boys and tell them that, though perhaps unable to answer, would certainly enjoy a line from some of them. Incidentally, also a little Durham or some sweet chewing plug would come in handy.—PVTE. HARRY C. WINTERS, 48541, N. F. S., Command Depot, Alnwick, Northumberland, England.

THOSE of you on the front, land or sea, ought to know how much the rest of us are interested in your letters. Drop us a line. We know the censor limits you but there is plenty left to say and we surely want to hear from you. Write to the Camp-Fire and reach lots of friends at once.

BY THE time this reaches you the third Liberty Loan will probably be calling you. Answer the call. Buy bonds.

I say this to you not as blind, unreasoning patriots but as thinking men, and I practise what I preach.

Every minute of the war America needs *our* support. When the Administration makes mistakes America needs *our* support all the more. If the Administration asks less of some other citizens than it does of us, that does not free us from our obligation in full. We set up this Administration to lead and command us; it stands now for our country. We may not like it or approve it, but we owe it our loyalty and support.

LOYALTY to America divides sharply into two duties. Our first duty, at any minute, is loyal support of whatever Administration is at that minute in power, unquestioning obedience to whatever laws are at that minute in force. Our second duty to America is to see to it that whatever Administration we have chosen for her does its duty as fully as we should do ours, sees and corrects its mistakes when possible, sees and removes its incompetents always. These two things constitute patriotism, loyalty to America, to the people. But the second duty must wait upon the first; we have no right to point out the mistakes of the Administration if we ourselves have made the mistake of failing to support that Administration *as it stands*.

America needs money *now*. Buy Liberty Bonds. Don't just complain in advance about how the Administration is going to use that money. You have no right to any voice in that until you have done *your* part and furnished some of that money. *Your* duty *now* is to buy Bonds.

WE KNOW that much of our money must go to remedy the results of the Administration's stubborn or stupid refusal to prepare in advance for the war, that trying to do in months what should have been done in years means the loss of much extra money, time and effort without any extra returns. But that colossal blunder of the Administration's can not now be undone. We must not make a blunder ourselves by not doing the best we can *now*. Buy Bonds. *After* that, see to it that as many as possible of the Administration who were responsible for the tragic blunder of Unpreparedness are forced from office or at least never again entrusted with public office in America. But while they are in office, support them. Buy Bonds.

THROUGH the investigation by Congress we begin to know who are the incompetents responsible for national mistakes and delays. Our duty is to insist that power be taken from the hands of incompetents. We know, for example, if the head of the Ordnance Bureau is incompetent, that not only should he be removed, but that his incompetency argues the incompetency of Secretary Baker who retained him, either knowing his incompetency or else so ignorant of the condition of one of the most important bureaus of his department that he did not know of the incompetency of its chief, his direct subordinate for whom he is responsible. Secretary Baker's incompetency seems sufficiently established in other ways. A pacifist Secretary of War who for three years refused to prepare at all because "the war was three thousand miles away" is bad enough, but a Secretary of War who, after nearly a year of American participation, is still three thousand miles away from the war and three million miles away from any real comprehension of its needs is too limited mentally for the country's fate to rest so largely in his small hand. If you are convinced of the incompetency of officials, it is your duty to call for their removal. But that is only your second duty to America. Your first duty is to do your own part well and fully. Buy Bonds.

WE KNOW that Congress and the Administration have not equally distributed the financial burden of the war. There are those who believe there should be *no* excess profits from war or other industries when most of us are losing by the war, not profiting from it. In the present upheaval of economic conditions, with practical accomplishment dependent so largely upon individual effort and stimulus, an eighty per cent. tax, as in England, would seem wiser and productive of quicker, better and bigger results. But not less than eighty per cent. Most of us believe that the hundreds of millions of such profits already made should be the first money spent for Liberty Bonds, since what earned them is so large a part of what the war is waged to protect. It is our second duty to America to force Congress and the Administration to distribute the cost of the war more fairly and justly. But it is our first duty to support the distribution as it stands.

We know that politics and party have sometimes been put before patriotism and country. Our crisis calls for a leadership drawn from the whole people, not chiefly from one political party; from the brains and energies of the whole country, not half of it. It is our second duty to demand a coalition Government, but first we must guarantee our own full energies and support. Buy Bonds.

WE KNOW that, after two years and a half of warning followed by nearly a year actually in the war, great America, the richest country in the world, with a population of a hundred millions, is now contributing to the war much money and moral support, some brains, a navy smaller than it should be, and, at this writing in January, an army almost the size of England's casualty lists for six or nine months. We know that great America is not able to meet the vital demand of the crisis for merchant ships—which even a neutral and pacifist country is free to build—and that at the end of a whole year our contribution of ships is still chiefly plans and provision for the future. We know that great America was so unprepared and so incompetent in the actual test that she is not even yet able to equip the comparatively small army she has put into the field and has had to borrow from her Allies what they needed for themselves. We know now that William Jennings Bryan by his glib and silver-tongued prediction that "a million men would spring to arms between sunrise and sunset" has written himself down as the ass of history. We begin to feel now the whole long, bitter, tragic proof of the blunder of Unpreparedness. It is our duty to see to it that, so long as other nations carry arms, the advocates of unpreparedness do not again bring us to the brink of catastrophe. But we must think of past unpreparedness now only as a warning for the future. The damage will be repaired, so far as it can be repaired, not by complaint but by work, loyalty, support. Buy Bonds.

BEFORE our troops go into their first big battle they have begun to pay the toll of eleventh-hour preparation following three years of unpreparedness. But they who have died for unpreparedness are for a later reckoning. They have no bearing on our present duty to America. Our present duty continues to be one thing—to do *our* part *now*.

Buy Bonds. Buy all you can afford, and afford all you can by cutting out things you do not need. Buy Bonds. But do not stop there. By this time each of us knows what is asked of him, the ways in which he can help win the war. You know your duty, do it. In all things. And the foremost of these things is support and loyalty to our Administration, good or bad, so long as it remains our Administration, and to each man in it so long as he remains a part of it. For the Administration stands for America.

I KNOW that in speaking thus frankly I shall bring down upon myself from a certain type of American the charge of being unpatriotic. Another of the Administration's mistakes has been the building up of the idea that any criticism of itself is disloyalty. Purely destructive criticism of it *is* disloyalty, at least in its effect, but neither honest constructive criticism nor a frank facing of the facts is unpatriotic in the eyes of any one but fools.

Any man or institution that denies the right of constructive criticism is un-American and undemocratic. Only a fool or a traitor withholds one jot of his loyalty because of mistakes that can not be remedied, but only an utter idiot or a more subtle and dangerous traitor calls it "patriotism" to allow a present mistake to go uncorrected or fails to take steps against future mistakes.

We are at war, and war is facts. A war has never yet been won with mistakes. Or by incompetents. Or with excuses. If we are to win this war we can not listen to excuses, we can not leave mistakes unremedied, we can not retain incompetents.

IT IS truth and frankness we need. "Tell the truth and win the war." We want the facts, not the camouflaged facts. Whitewash is not war. Claims are not accomplishments. Sugar-coating does not destroy the bitter pill within. We have guts enough for facts, but not stomach enough for sweetened infant-food. Let us have a man's diet.

What disciple of fear and untruth can openly maintain that the American people will not fight better and make themselves better able to fight if they know the full need and danger? War makes necessary

the suppression of information that will aid the enemy, if he doesn't know it already, but war also makes necessary the giving out of information whose *suppression* will aid the enemy.

I WILL make no appeal to any man's patriotism if the only kind of patriotism I am allowed to invoke is the kind that has neither eyes or ears or brains. And if any one finds disloyalty in what I have stated, I call attention to the fact that it is exactly the same kind of disloyalty that, from the Summer of 1914 to date, has been fighting for national Preparedness while certain other very good Americans were "too proud to fight" and too pacifically asleep to do more than watch waitfully behind the barn door until the horse had been stolen.

My platform now is very simple. First, let's all turn to and try to catch the horse. Second, let's see that the barn door isn't left open again.

In other words, let us do our immediate duty immediately. Buy Liberty Bonds. After that, let us attend to our next duty—see to it that the Liberty Bonds are used to America's best advantage.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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These services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

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In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelop— companies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

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Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure — A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
J. P. TUCKER, Hotel Lonsdale, 1410 Minor Ave., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Tucker.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, care of Starbuck Ranch, Morrison, Colo. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake, Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada, covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Care Paul Tausig & Son, 104 E. 14th St., New York, N. Y. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, care of H. E. ROBERTS, 55 John Street, New York, N. Y. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

West African Opportunities

Question:—"Will you please tell me something of the conditions of employment and climate in West Africa? I have a chance of getting free passage to Sierra Leone and will thank you very much for the information."—WILBUR G. LEEKLEY, Albuquerque, New Mex.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—Your inquiry as to climate and employment in West Africa:

To secure employment write, stating your age, schooling and general experience to:

Niger Company, Surrey House, Victoria Embankment, London; Lever Brothers, Royal Lever Buildings, Liverpool, England, O. & F. Dept. (Working mostly the Congo, also the Niger); The African Association, 43 Castle St., Liverpool, England; Messrs. Pinniock, Ltd., Harley Buildings, 11 Oldhall St., Liverpool; Alex. Miller & Bros., 34 Beaufort St., Liverpool; Messrs. W. B. McIvor & Co., Ltd., Colonial House, Water St., Liverpool; African Traders Co., 42 Drury Buildings, Liverpool; Benin River Produce Co., 23 Alexander Building, Ormond St., West Liverpool, England.

Conditions of employment:—The above use men in their small shipyards and machine shops in Africa, men to boss the blacks, deck officers and engineers for their river boats, agents in charge of the trading stations. A clean-cut young fellow, 25 to 30, who can keep simple accounts would not have much trouble securing work, especially if he turned up at the home office. Whites do not go floating around West Africa looking for jobs, but if a white did get stranded he would be put to something by the local agent.

The contract usually calls for three years, which is about as much as a white can stand of the climate in one jolt. The pay is unattractive, but most of the companies board their staffs generously, the life offers individual freedom, and if a man works out well it is usual to grant him a bonus at the end of his contract.

Climate:—The climate of West Africa is notorious, parts of the coasts being known as the white man's grave. Malaria, canned foods and contributory causes, such as isolation—the sudden cutting off from newspapers, games, movies, companionship and the crowding interests of civilization—and the sun, will "get" most whites in time. A few years of it, too, unfits one for any home job again. One shrinks from one's fellow creatures, or as Kipling says "the jungle has them," and yet those who have been there never shake off the romance of the land and the yearning to hear again the tom-toms of the "mammy dance," to live under free skies, close down to the primitive, to march at the head of the long column of blacks under the low-hung stars—the magic and mystery of the land.

The year is divided into wet and dry seasons. For months the bald, cruel sun crawls across steel-gray skies and one thinks of a cloud and a breath of wind as of Paradise. Then come the rains, an

annual staging of the Deluge, when the sun becomes but a memory.

Health depends largely on temperament and locality and social conditions. Let a young man with clean ideals find himself cut off from the world in a sequestered trading station and sub-agent to a man with whisky bottle and "mammy," and a sneer for everything decent, and he'll go to pieces in no time.

If you are not self-resourceful—if you have no hobby, nor curiosity in the world you find yourself in, then keep out of West Africa. To have a hobby—collect butterflies, orchids, insects; or hunt or delve into native superstitions and traditions—to keep cheerfully occupied, exercise, take a night-cap of quinine and drink moderately of good light wines (to back up a canned-food dietary) and any one can get through his three years without great reduction in physical stamina. He will be signing on for another three years before his bonus is spent. Whites will never colonize in West Africa. It is the land of the blacks. The whites will go on exploiting them, and the blacks, notwithstanding the fond dreams of missionaries and the pet theories of governments, will never climb any height out of their ingrained barbarism.

There are many tribes, many dialects. Some of the natives are semi-civilized—notably the Housa, who are not negroes proper. The hinterlands are fanatically Mohammedan. There are large pagan districts where the missionaries of Mohammedanism and Christianity compete for converts.

The U. S. Forestry Service

Question:—"I am 25 years of age. Would like to know something of the Forest Reserve, Ranger Service of the Northwest; how an appointment is secured, what the requirements are and any other useful information."——, Streator, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The only way to get a position with the Forest Service is through taking a civil service examination. At the present time the service is waiving tests of various kinds, such as recognition of various trees by bark or leaf, packing a mule, timber cruising and lumber sealing. This is due to the sending of men to France, which has made a shortage of men. The pay runs from $1,100 to $1,600 a year.

The usual examination takes in lumber sealing, timber cruising, the recognition of all kinds of trees by bark, leaf, and general appearance, fire prevention and fire fighting, certain knowledge of soils and of minerals, map making, surveying, riding, rifle and revolver shooting, a knowledge of book and account keeping, and various minor matters.

The duties are: watching for fires and fighting them, looking after campers to see that they leave no fires burning, arresting violators of rules, counting stock grazed on reserves, settling boundaries for grazing, timber cruising, sales of standing timber, scaling the cut and collecting pay, killing predatory animals, helping game wardens, acting as general utility man to the whole reserve; inspecting mining claims to pass on their merits and prevent fraudulent claims being taken up in order to get the timber, watching men who fell timber to prevent useless destruction of small trees, building new lookout stations in almost inaccessible places, cutting firebreaks through brush, climbing 150 feet high to gather pine cones for the seeds; propagating trees forrestocking denuded areas, setting out such new stock, packing water to such stock when set, building bridges, running telephone wires, etc.

In addition to the duties named, the ranger is always at the beck and call of any settler who is in trouble. My nephew, when in the service, had to take an insane woman out one time, from 8,000 feet above sea level, to a lowland asylum, through forty-five miles of the roughest of mountain roads. He had help, of course. He and his mate had to carry a dead woman seven miles on their backs, over snow 35 feet deep, taking turns with the burden. He had to defend himself with a hastily seized club against the attacks of a man armed with an ax, just because he refused to let the man cheat the Government on a timber deal. He had to fight fire thirty-one days in succession, with less than four hours' sleep in every twenty-four.

He had to arbitrate between angry cattlemen, between cattlemen and sheepmen, between settlers and campers. He had to ride over 3,000 miles in sixty-one days, using two horses. He had to help pack all the materials for a lookout hut up Mt. Shasta, when it was a matter of crawling a good part of the way, clinging to a thousand-foot rope to help along, and then helped build the hut where the wind blew 40 miles an hour across a glacier. Part of the way they dynamited a trail across the glacier where the ice lay in ridges ten feet high and from one to five feet thick, with spaces between equal to ridge.

These few points will give you a faint idea of the job. Most of all, a man must have nerve and initiative. A soft, easy-going man is worth nothing there. He must be self-controlled, alert, able-bodied, quick in mind and body, well informed, confident.

Canoeing through the Adirondacks

Question:—"Two friends and myself are going to take a canoe trip through the Adirondacks, stopping at Long Lake to camp for a while, then going to the St. Lawrence River (near Ft. Covington, N. Y.) and home by Lake Champlain, Lake George, and the Hudson.

"Will you kindly tell me the best route to take from Albany, also the best and lightest equipment?"—T. H. Rogers, Yonkers, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—I think perhaps your best route to Indian Lake will be up the Hudson to Indian River, and thence into the lake, to your camping-ground. The way the water has been so far this year, you will have ample, but it will be upstream work, of course.

From Indian Lake I think you would better haul across to Raquette River, striking it almost anywhere from Blue Mt. Lake to Long Lake. I believe there are several routes you could take across from Indian Lake, involving longer or shorter carries over the divide. Your route would be through some of the wildest of the Adirondacks.

I would prefer two small canoes to one large one—but that is merely choice. It would have advantage in case of a smash-up, involving three tourists. Have yokes for making carries; fit before starting.

The Conservation Commission, Albany, N. Y., print Adirondack maps which you could obtain, I think, through your Assemblyman or State Senator. The U. S. Geological Survey prints Topographical

Survey Maps of the Adirondacks showing contours (elevations), and if you write for Adirondack Index Sheet and get the sheets covering the route of the river, you will have the best maps there are to travel by. Paste cheese-cloth on the backs. I cut mine on the black rectangular lines, to fold them without breaking.

As to outfit, I enclose a sheet of suggestions. Would add that each member could carry a waterproof blanket, woolen blanket and hammock, folded inside the waterproof. Swing hammocks between trees and hang waterproof over hammock, dry bed; drip, in rain will follow the lines down into hammock, unless you warp handkerchief around to switch it to the ground.

Don't forget fly dope.

Going to Sea

Question:—"I am a high-school boy seventeen years old and would like to have some information about the sea.

"How can a boy work up to become a ship's officer, and how long does it usually take? What is the rate of pay for officers?"——, Superior, Wis.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—It matters little how you start going to sea in order to become an officer, but of course you must enter the Deck Department of ships.

It is not hard in these days for a young man to get a job aboard ship; men are badly needed—prospective officers are encouraged. Supposing first of all that you are healthy, fairly robust, and have good eyesight, you can do either of several things: enter one of the big lines as a cadet, ship as boy in any ship—ocean-going for preference—or enter one of the various branches of the Naval Reserve Service. All this experience will count.

You must serve on deck three years usually before you are eligible to take the examination for second mate. The knowledge in navigation necessary for this examination must be acquired by yourself, either by study aboard the ship in your own time, or by attending a school ashore between voyages. It is by no means difficult. A high-school education is more than most sailors have before going to sea. Then, when you get the second mate's license, and have served one year in that capacity, you can take the first mate's exam.; and with one year's service as first mate, the master's exam. is open to you.

You should be at least first mate in four years. But in these war days I think a smart man can become an officer quicker than the law stipulates. Barriers are being lowered in order to secure officers.

Pay for officers at present is high. Third mates are receiving as much as $75 per month. Of course they are fed well and gratis; their lodging is in the ship, free. Second mates can get up to $200, and mates as much as $300 in the Atlantic Trade. Captains are making huge sums, with war bonuses, gratuities, etc. But after the war, you will, perhaps, realize, these wages can not obtain, unless freights are to remain at their present exorbitant rates. This can hardly be, I think, since trade can not stand such charges. In any case, a steamer's officer is paid well enough to make the profession attractive, and the life is good.

My advice is that you go to your nearest port on the seacoast, and apply in person to the chief mate or captain of any good-sized ship going anywhere. The chief mate usually engages the men, subject to the skipper's approval; but for a youngster to start right he should try to select a fairly good-class skipper, talk to him in person, and enlist his interest. Captains in these times are of a superior mold to the old-timers, at least in education and breeding, though perhaps not better seamen. I'll be glad to know how you succeed, and am always at your service.

The Canadian Northwest

Question:—"Are conditions good in B. C. or Alberta for a man who is willing to do any work in order to live and learn the country? I am not destitute, but wish to earn my way while absorbing what the country has to offer to soothe an itching foot and an imagination that seeks food for a diary of adventure." ——, Detroit, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—You certainly have the right idea of how to come to B. C. or any other place which is new to you and where the conditions are different from those in the East, since the one way to obtain information about a country is to live there a while.

Employment of all kinds is to be had almost anywhere out here, the larger cities being distributing points for the districts in which they are situated.

Just at present the mills, shipyards and logging-camps are simply howling for help and the pay is good, the cost of living rather less than it is in the East while so far as I can learn, the relations between employer and employee are much pleasanter than almost anywhere else.

By coming now you could learn enough to land a job with a surveying party or on the reclamation or forestry service in the Spring and for an outdoor man these jobs are hard to beat. The war has stripped B. C. of her best men, in some instances whole districts have been practically depopulated which means just that many openings for the newcomer. These things have to be learned and the one way to do it is to come and take what you can get until such time as you can get what you want.

I can not see a single reason why an independent man should hesitate to come to the coast, Western Washington being as good a place as any to begin gathering experience, since the conditions here are almost identical with those across the Line and getting more so every day. If there is any particular brand of labor which you are partial to, let me know what it is and I will give you my opinion as to which would be the best place to locate.

Lumbering in Tennessee

Question:—"Will you kindly give me some information regarding the lumbering industry in your district? Also advise me as to necessary steps I would have to take to get a position in lumbering camps.

"I am twenty years old, have high-school education, and two years' clerical experience in the city."—Frederick C. Roome, New York City.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—Concerning the lumbering and logging operations in my district, they are being carried on chiefly far back in the hills; though sometimes the logging outfit is in the hills, and the

sawmill that uses the logs in a town. Our lowland timber, in this section, is largely cut out.

As to the steps necessary to land a position—it would be called a "job" here—about all you'd have to do would be to let some camp or mill know you wanted work. I enclose herewith a late advertisement for men. If you go in answer to it, don't dress up. Stick to flannel shirts and soft hats.

Work hard, and don't have too much to say until you get acquainted. There are lots of good fellows among timberjacks, but they all have a particular hankering after fighting. You may have to put up a scrap or two; if you do, fight like the devil, and be sure you don't use any weapons unless the other fellow shows a pretty sure sign of using one.

I've given you all this advice because you're only twenty. You are rather young to go into a logging outfit for a job. It's a wild, rough life.

Jiu-Jitsu

Question:—"Could you give me any information on the subject of Jiu-Jitsu as practised in Japan? Where could I obtain some literature dealing with the subject.

"I have several small pamphlets on it but I don't think they treat the subject fully."—LENORE HOUSE, Ada, Oklahoma.

Answer, by Mr. Ritchie:—In the limits of an "Ask Adventure" answer I can not begin to tell you all there is to know about Jiu-Jitsu; no more than could the well-known Mr. James Corbett reveal the science of boxing in anything less than a series of articles. Once I started Jiu-Jitsu under a licensed instructor in Japan; when I had taken lessons for two months he told me—and not before—that the full course occupied three years, I quit right there.

"As you doubtless know already, the adept at Jiu-Jitsu must possess a knowledge of anatomy almost as complete as a surgeon's, and he can kill an adversary by a pinch or the blow of his open palm. In Japan, therefore, nobody is permitted to learn the science of "conquering by yielding" except from responsible and licensed instructors. There would be no room in Jiu-Jitsu for a Battling Nelson or Knock-out Brown; one must have a head for the game instead of just a "punch."

The pamphlets you mention are positively worthless. I can refer you to two books on the subject which could be purchased through Macmillan Company, New York: "Japanese Physical Training," by H. Irving Hancock, and "Jiu-Jitsu Tricks," by K. Saito. Better write Macmillan's, asking them the price and whether they can procure these works for you if they have not got them in stock.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN OUT OF EVERY FIVE OF ALL THOSE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS

STEVENSON, 'ALEXANDER M. Scotch; about 26 or 27 years old; 5 ft. 7 in. tall; slim build; dark hair, wears glasses. Was 4th Eng. on S.S. *Crogdon* when sunk. Ran Commercial Service Bureau in Hartford, Conn., about a year ago. Later went to Holyoke, Mass. May have returned to Scotland. He was to go to S. A. with me last Spring. Present address wanted.—Address L. T., 362.

EVANS, WILLE. Last heard of in Medford, Canada, in 1912. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to E. RUSSELL DUSTIN, 80 East 1st So. St., Salt Lake City, Utah.

HELM, JOE. Friend. Last heard from at Gila Bend, Arizona, in 1915. At this time he was employed as locating engineer at the Gila Bend & Ajo R.R., and was contemplating a trip to the west coast of Mexico. Any information concerning him will be gratefully received. Address FRED L. HARGETT, Replacement Troop Depot, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WARGO, JOE. Last heard from 13 years ago and was then living at Mrs. Anna Kosoras, 4623 Hosefin St., Denver, Colorado. He is 33 years old; about 6 ft. tall and has blond hair. Mother would like to see him. —Address JULIUS WARGO, 449 Delaware Ave., Lorain, Ohio.

WATKINS, O. V. Civil Engineer. Last heard from four years ago near Acapulco, Mexico. Write to Box 148, Mayer, Arizona.

WILLIAMS, THOMAS JEFFERSON of Fort Worth, Texas. Worked as bellboy at Brown Palace, Denver, in 1908, under name of Jack Alvin and is known from coast to coast as Little Raffles. Any one that has seen him in last five years write to J. A. ALTHOS (Big Raffles), Box 1458, Miami, Arizona.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

RAYMOND, W. L. Married Mrs. Annie M. Edmonds in Hancock County, Bay City, Mississippi, in 1887. Any one sending information that will locate him will be paid.—Address L. T., 361.

LEE, LEELAND AND BENNETT. Last address Berkley, Va. College class 1909. The inquirer is friend of their childhood. Lived in same house, Calle Absola, Monterey, Mexico 1900—1901. Information wanted by J. GINOL, 182 Calle Libertad, Buenos Aires, Argentina, South America.

GOODACRE, LEON. Last heard from in Tampico—or near there—in the oil fields.—Address PHIL. C. SNODGRASS, Box 148, Mayer, Arizona.

BROWN, BERRY. Dentist. Traveled with me from San Pedro in Spanish Honduras to Guatemala City via Puerto Barricos in October, 1912. The last I heard of him he had opened up an office in Antigua, Guatemala.—Address M. LLOYD ROTHERMEL, 2131 6th Ave., North, Brimingham, Ala.

MILLER, WILLIAM GUSTAF. Brother. Left home in Brooklyn, N. Y., during September, 1913, and at that time was 16 years old, about 5 ft. 5 in. in height; weighed about 125 pounds. He had light-brown hair and blue eyes. Willie communicate with me, I need you. Any information will be gratefully appreciated by his sister.—Address L. T., 363.

DIGGS, JOHN W. Last heard from in November at Greenville, S. C. He was then traveling for the American Tobacco Co. of New York.—Address MRS. J. C. SMITH, 612 Cass Ave., West Plains, Mo.

ROGERS, ATHURE. Was with me on the Str. *Norman Bridge*, an oil tanker bound to Tampico, Mexico, and later on the Str. *La Brea* bound from Tampico to Chile. We parted in Balboa, C. Z., last May, he going to New Orleans and I to New York.—Address SGT. WILLIAM HEWITT, Electrician Sergeant, Fort Adams, R. I.

ROSS, DAVID H. Last heard from in 1915. Was with his family in the State of Jalisco near Guadalajara, Mexico. Reported murdered. Report later contradicted. —Address PHIL. C. SNODGRASS, Box 148, Mayer, Arizona.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either First March or Mid-March issues of *Adventure*. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine.

ADAMS, "JEFF"; Campbell, Orville R.; Cox, Sherman W. or Cox, Austin A.; Emeigh, Jacob; Flint, Harry; Hall, J. Harold; Hogan, John *alias* Frank Burke; Holl (Bob) Robert; Hopkins, Horace; Kelly, Sergeant M.; Landells, Gavin or Guy; Lynch, Miss Barbara Lynch; McCully, Manning; MacDougall, Dougall; Meadows, Robert E.; Pelton, Fred; Rogers, Nelson Miles; Sheridan, Martin A.; Siller, Walter; Starks, William N.; Vinc, Peter; Weaver, Jospeh C.; Zun, Edw. "Blondy."

MISCELLANEOUS: Lawrence Shato, Thurston Houghton; Frank Dewey; Otto Seaton; Corky Clark; Benard Benny; Preston.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, Ruth Gilfillan, Lee Hays. Jack P. Robinson, Lieut. Vincent Howard Brandt.

NUMBERS L. T., 284, C. 293, W. 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

A trip around the map—that will be the Mid-April *Adventure*, which comes to you on March 18. Some of the stops we'll make in the eleven stories are: Old England and Madagascar; the early Dakotas; the wilderness of the Philippines; Paradise, Montana; medieval Sicily; Dos Palmas, California; Colonial Pennsylvania; the Upper Niger, Africa; and the cold North Country.

You will find:

The Making of a Man *By Frederick S. Macy*

A story of the Philippines and a soldier who shrank in fear from the curved blades and guerilla fighting of the Fillipinos.

Timothy's Nautical Scoop *By Captain A. E. Dingle*

Timothy wants to be a sailor, but finding the opportunities on a British man-o'-war too limited he deserts to the *Brosy Lass*—from the frying-pan into the fire.

An Express from Ligonier *By Hugh Pendexter*

Carrying messages was their main business, these hardy runners of the Colonial express, but sometimes they found other duties—such as *Cleb Barters* found outside Fort Ligonier.

Rule "G" *By Russell A. Boggs*

A story of the railroad and the one rule which must never be broken. Also, what happens when it is.

The Game-Warden *By Henry Oyen*

Old Tom Simmons was paid to protect deer, and protect them he did, from friend or foe, although he knew his own life might be the price of his vigilance.

Goda'mighty's Pardner *By Wilbur Hall*

A tale of Dos Palmas—of how *Goda'mighty's Pardner* came to a mining town with his church services and prospecting.

Hidden Trails, Part III *By William Patterson White*

In the third part of this thrilling story of the Old West *Johnny* and *Laguerre* set out to find the owner of black-tail dun. Their quest takes them to an Indian reservation and—the redhead.

The Show-Down *By Thomas S. Miller*

Trial by ordeal is frowned upon by civilization. But in the heart of Africa on the banks of the Upper Niger it sometimes works justice.

Muley's Morals *By W. C. Tuttle*

Another roaring Paradise story, being the account of how *Muley Bowles* resists temptation—in the form of the Paradise bank.

MID-APRIL ADVENTURE

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Four Thousand Frantic Germans

WHEN the German army invaded Belgium, German diplomatic interests were in the hands of Brand Whitlock, United States Minister. In one evening four thousand frantic Germans besieged the American Legation for passports and transportation to German territory.

"As we went down the stairs on our way out," writes Mr. Whitlock, "there in the hall we saw a woman in tears; her husband, a German, was with her and he sat there in dumb, Teutonic melancholy. They had with them a little boy with golden curls, one of the prettiest children I ever saw, with the sweet face of one of Raffael's cherubs, who looked up inquiringly into his mother's sad face.

"At sight of me the woman sprang forward and seized my hand, as though I were her last refuge in the world, and with such sobs and lamentations as might break a heart, fell on her knees, refusing to let go my hand and dragging on tragically toward me on her knees. I felt the embarrassment of one of our race in such a predicament, tore my hand away, picked up the pretty baby and kissed him, and left—we had to get to that meeting—the woman dragging after me all the way to the door. . . .

"When I reached home I learned that my wife and the mothers and Miss Larner had taken the little boy up-stairs and played with him all evening until Mr. Gibson, (Secretary of the American Legation,) took the little family away in the motor to the Cirque Royale, where they assembled the Germans who were to go out on the refugee train that night. I had a vision of that bright, pretty, innocent little child, and the little family whirled away in the great whirlpool into darkness—to what fate? We should never know, I said, never see any of them again. . . .

"But we did. A few days after the Germans had established themselves in Brussels, the father of the pretty little boy took a room near Mr. Gibson's apartment in the Rue St. Boniface and, in his quality of German spy, watched Mr. Gibson's every movement."

It is such personal anecdotes that make vividly real Brand Whitlock's story of Belgium's tragedy.

In the most extraordinary and significant war-story yet written, Mr. Whitlock has built up a powerful, dramatic, absorbing narrative of facts such as only an eye-witness and able writer can tell.

The second instalment appears in the March number of

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